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ESSAYS

ON THE

PREACHING REQUIRED BY THE TIMES,

AND THE

BEST METHODS OF OBTAINING IT;

WITH

REMINISCENCES AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF METHODIST PREACHING.

INCLUDING

Rules for Extemporaneous Preaching,

AND

CHARACTERISTIC SKETCHES OF OLIN, FISK, BASCOM, COOKMAN, SUMMERFIELD, AND OTHER NOTED EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHERS.

By ABEL STEVENS.

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PREFACE.

The first five chapters of this volume appeared as part of a series of articles, entitled "The Christianity required by the Times," in the National Magazine for 1854. The remaining chapters formed a series of articles on "Methodist Preaching" in the Methodist Quarterly Review, for 1852. The readers of the original articles will observe that they have been thoroughly revised, enlarged, and otherwise modified. The author has not, however, deemed it necessary to drop the peculiarities of their style, as periodical articles, for the graver dignity usual to books on religious subjects. He hopes also that any apparent want of unity, in some parts of the work, arising from the same cause, will not amount to a serious fault.

It will be seen that the writer has not attempted anything like a thorough treatise on Homiletics; he confines himself to special questions respecting the methods, the responsibilities, and, particularly, the defects of the modern pulpit, the reasons of its comparatively ineffective and (as some allege) declining power. On the subject of *extemporaneous* preaching he has, however, attempted to be more comprehensive and practical. The moral qualifications for the sacred office, which in a more general

work should have been more fully treated, are, he hopes, implied with sufficient distinctness throughout the volume.

While the first part of the work treats of the subject in general, and will, it is hoped, be acceptable to clerical readers generally, its latter part relates mostly to Methodist preaching. The unequaled success of the ministerial methods of Methodism can hardly fail to interest readers of other denominations, and to give importance to this part of the volume; but should the writer's ministerial brethren in other Churches demand of him an apology for this sectarian aspect of a production which, in other respects, may be considered liable to the charge of too much liberalism, he hopes it will be sufficient to remind them, that this part of the volume was originally written for a denominational periodical and a denominational purpose; that in the public calls for the present publication, these articles have been particularly demanded, and that their character is fairly indicated in the title-page of the volume.

Notwithstanding repeated calls for these articles from the public papers and from personal sources, the author could not have the presumption to commit them to the press in this form, were it not that they have been demanded by the "unanimous vote" of an ecclesiastical body—the Providence Conference—comprising more than a hundred and fifty clergymen with whom he has held fraternal relations for many years, and whose commands are always laws with him.

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INTRODUCTION.

We hail the following effort to explain, and enforce the true design, and the most efficient manner of preaching the Gospel, as a very timely, and a very able exposition of the subject. The reader will find it a compendium of what Scripture teaches and experience has illustrated in the premises; and it is time that Dr. Johnson's adage had come into the currency of a proverb—"Experience, which is always contradicting theory, is the only test of truth." But both Scripture and experience teach that God alone can select, and call, and qualify ministers of his word—preachers of the Gospel—to promulgate with effect the divine message of mercy and salvation to the world. "He that entereth not through this door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." No matter how brilliant his parts, how extensive his learning, how great his acquirements in metaphysical and physical science and literature, or how eloquent he may be, without this calling of God, he is an intruder into the sacred office, and will hinder, rather than promote the spread of the Gospel and Scriptural holiness in the earth. Our blessed Lord chose his instru-

ments for the propagation of the Gospel—his apostles—from the humblest ranks and callings of society; men, wholly unacquainted even with the learning of the Jews, as well as with that of the Greeks and Romans. They were sent to teach that which he taught them,—the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel as the only way of salvation from sin in this world, and from its consequences in the world to come; and these became the able and successful ministers of the new covenant, turning thousands "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," without the aid of human learning or philosophy.

In answer to this it is alledged that the apostles were miraculously endowed: that the gifts of healing and of tongues were imparted to them to qualify them for the work to which they were called, but as these miraculous gifts are not now imparted to the ministers of the Gospel, they must apply themselves to the acquiring of literature and philosophy as qualifications for their calling. Yet, in the various gifts bestowed upon the first preachers of the Gospel, we do not find there were included, either the knowledge of Rabbinical or Grecian learning or literature. Now surely our Lord knew what was necessary to them as messengers of that great salvation he sent them to proclaim; and that he could have as easily imparted to them all the treasures of Rabbinical and Grecian lore, as the gift of tongues—the knowledge of all languages. If he did not do so, we have a right to infer that the metaphysical systems of philosophy, whether Jewish or Pagan, were not necessary to them even as auxiliary aids, much less as an essential qualification for their work.

But it must be admitted that some twenty years after our Lord's ascension he called another apostle, a man well versed in human learning and the various systems of philosophy of his time. Taken from the feet of Gamaliel, a Jewish LL. D., and though lineally an Israelite, yet a Greek by birth he came to the apostleship with all the treasures of scholastic qualifications which the most fastidious hearers could require. Yet what does he himself tell us of the availability of these qualifications in the great work in which he was engaged. In his first letter to the Church at Corinth, which he himself had planted, he assures them that they were not indebted in the smallest degree to the wisdom of the world for the religion they enjoyed, or the great benefits they had derived from the Gospel: "for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." By the *wisdom of God* the apostle did not mean the wisdom of which God was the author, but that of which he was the object, answering precisely to our term *theology;* and by the foolishness of preaching, that which the wise and the learned of this world called foolishness—the preaching of Christ crucified,—to the believer "the wisdom of God and the power of God." The sum of the apostles' teaching is that the study of natural theology—the wisdom of which God is the object, or metaphysical philosophy applied to the study of theology, had failed to find out the nature and attributes of the true God, or the way to worship and serve him so as to secure his favor, and to obtain eternal life at his hand. All this is learned from the revelation which God has been pleased to make

of himself, and is taught only by the Gospel which he had sent his apostles to preach. Our faith, therefore, the faith which brings salvation, must stand not in the wisdom, or philosophy of men, but in Christ crucified, who is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

To publish this Gospel—this perfect scheme of mercy and salvation—to the children of men, the same apostle tells us that "God in the beginning gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and the edification of the body of Christ"—the conversion of sinners, and the "building up believers in their most holy faith." This was the divine plan at the beginning of the Gospel dispensation, and we have no ground for believing that divine wisdom has made any subsequent change in his economy in this respect. God still calls to the work of the ministry, men of various talents and endowments, suited to the various conditions of men and Churches; and urges upon those whom he calls the duty of hastening to enter upon their work. And this requirement is impressed upon the consciousness of the persons called, whether from the ordinary avocations of life, or from the feet of Gamaliel—the colleges of learning. They are to lay their impressions before their brethren, and the Church is to decide whether the call be divine, or otherwise, and the judgment is to be formed on the rule laid down by our Lord himself, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Have they grace or piety, have they a clear apprehension of the way of salvation according to Scripture, and from personal experience; have they in some good degree a ready utterance, so as to be able to com-

municate what they know to others, and, above all, have they fruit? Has God owned their labours in exercising their gifts of exhortation? If all these signs combine in any one we judge he is called to preach the Gospel, though he may have little human learning. This has been the doctrine and practice of Methodism. When we change our doctrine and practice in this respect, as the Israelites changed their theocracy for monarchy, to be like the nations around them, we may, like them, obtain our desire: may attain a high standing in the literary and scientific world, but we may, like them, loose the *Urim and Thummim*—that blessed presence and power of God which has, heretofore, accompanied our ministry, and given it a success which is known and acknowledged of all men. The Jews may have gained the wordly elevation they sought by the election of Saul as their king; but the holy of holies, in their tabernacle, lost that which was the chief distinction, and most valuable of all its endowments. The high priest annually, on the great day of atonement, lifted the vail, in due form, and entered the holy of holies, sprinkling the mercy seat with the blood of the victim; but the Urim and Thummim, God who dwelt between the cherubim, which covered the ark with their wings, was no longer there!! What a poor compensation was the wordly honor their nation had acquired for the loss of the divine presence they suffered by departing from the institution of Jehovah!

In the following pages we find clearly exhibited the design of preaching, as we learn it from the Scriptures of truth, and from this original design itself is inferred what a preacher ought to be, and the manner in which he should

deliver his message. He should be clear in his convictions of the truth of his message, and the condition of those to whom he is called to deliver it. He is required to follow the example of his Lord—sent to "seek and to save them who are lost," and to declare to them the only conditions on which they can be saved. His hearers, though of every variety and description of character which humanity presents are all alike in one respect. They are moral free agents, placed in this world to undergo a state of probation, trial, or discipline, under the divine appointment, in reference to an ulterior purpose of God, to be developed in a future state of being; and their condition in the world to come is to depend upon the improvement they make of the blessings, the advantages, and opportunities afforded them in the providence of God in their state of probation in this life. Here only can they acquire the holiness which will fit them for the enjoyments of heaven. Yet he finds them, for the most part, living without reference to their eternal interests, without God, and without hope in the world. Hastening to death and judgment, they are absorbed by sensual and earthly delights, giving themselves up to the "lusts of the flesh and the pride of life." God has sent him to alarm them by presenting their danger, by setting before them the retributions of eternity, and when he has awakened in them the earnest desire to flee the wrath to come, to announce to them the Gospel salvation; to penetrate their souls with the joyous declaration of the Saviour, that "God so loved the world"—a world dead in trespasses and sins—a province of his empire in open rebellion—that "he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life." Now surely the preacher will be in earnest—will show, in his manner and address, his own deep conviction of the truths he utters, and of his deep feeling for the awful danger to which his hearers are exposed at every step of life. Hence earnestness and zeal are indispensable qualifications in the messenger of God—the preacher of the Gospel.

But is such earnestness and zeal compatible with the cold discussions and formal arrangements of scholastic divinity? In the following work the dialectics of the theological schools are fairly exhibited, and we are free to say that the trammels, imposed upon the pulpit by theologians, has done more to prevent its success than all the writings of the deists and atheists of ancient or modern times. We heartily thank brother Stevens for the scathing criticism he has given of the manuals which—save the mark—are furnished to young preachers as models upon which to construct their sermons, and which would, if adopted, crystalize the earnestness of preaching into an iceberg.

But we would call especial attention to the remarks on extemporaneous preaching in the following work. It is to the reading of sermons our preachers will be most tempted: and the evil of yielding to the temptation is made very apparent. And we think, no one who reads what is said on the subject in this little volume can believe the reading of sermons compatible with the zeal and earnestness which should characterize the preacher of the Gospel, impressed as he should be with the deep anxiety for the present immediate effects of his efforts to pluck the souls of his hearers out of the fire—as brands from the burning.

The article on Methodist preaching is just, bold, and fearless. At the risk of what is most painful to a man of delicacy and good taste, the being called a sectarian bigot, the writer claims for our fathers to have furnished the best models of true evangelical preachers, and the most successful in accomplishing the great end and ultimate design of preaching the Gospel. But his facts bear him out; and he may set all cavil and criticism at defiance. Theirs was the preaching for their times: and we doubt whether any other kind of preaching is required by the present times, or will be hereafter, while the world remains "dead in trespasses and sins," in despite of the more general diffusion of learning and philosophy.

THOMAS E. BOND, SEN.

ESSAYS

ON THE

PREACHING REQUIRED BY THE TIMES.

ESSAY I.

DEFECTS OF MODERN PREACHING AND THEIR REMEDIES.

Homiletics — Meaning of the Word — Its modern Abuse — Actual Character of our Preaching — History of Preaching — The Primitive Sermon — Origen — Preaching among the Puritans — Modern "Manuals" on Preaching — A Criticism on Sturtevant — An Example of "Skeletonizing" — Objections to Skeletons — "Great Preachers" — Clerical Estimates of Preaching.

The pulpit is one of the permanent institutions of Christianity. It is founded in the permanent necessities of the Church, and was ordained as expressly as the "Sacraments,"—to continue "even unto the end of the world." Claiming a divine authorization, charged with the promulgation of the divine will, appealing to the deepest sensibilities of human nature, and at the same time capable of consecrating to its purposes, most, if not all the aids of learning and genius, and nearly every subject of public interest, it ought certainly to stand unrivaled on

the earth in its moral power,—the supreme source of influence over the mind of the world. It is not necessary that we should here question whether such is its sway or not. Whatever we may claim to be its actual power, unquestionably it does not approach the effectiveness which its peculiar advantages ought to afford. If its influence is not declining throughout Christendom, as is sometimes alleged, undeniably it falls far short of what our own times require. We propose to discuss some of the causes and remedies of this deficiency.

We must further premise that while we cannot, of course, pretend to anything very original on the subject, we should not deem it proper to waste our pages with its conceded commonplaces; we expect to say many things that will not be conceded, and to say them outrightly. We bespeak, therefore, the indulgence of our readers, especially of our clerical readers, who, we trust, would rather read our honest dissent from the current views of the subject, than the hackneyed arguments for them.

What is the character of our actual preaching? Why is it such? And what should it be? Allow us to answer these questions as frankly as we can; the first two at least, as the

answer of these will imply their converse—the answer of the third.

And let not the reader suppose, from this methodical "division of the subject," that we are about to inflict on him a homily on "Homiletics." Far from it. We shall say some very hard things against that sham-art, as we deem it; one that might properly be defined the art of making preaching artificial. Preaching an art! We might almost as well have an art of rejoicing with those who rejoice, and of weeping with those who weep—of exercising the holiest charities—of communing with God himself. Even prayer has been defined into an art by "Homiletics." There are many shams yet in science, and some in art; but what science is fuller of them than "Dogmatic Theology," (if we except the kindred one of Speculative Philosophy,) and what art more disfigured by them than "Homiletics?"

We use this term, of course, in its modern technicalized sense. It is marvelous how it has become thus technicalized. Its etymology and its first use are directly against its modern application. Homily, in old sensible Greek, meant a sociable discourse—a discourse in company. It had a very humble meaning down to

the day of the Reformation even; and the "Book of Homilies,"—that sterling old standard of the Anglican Church—was a collection of simple, easy discourses, got out at the period of the Reformation, to be read in the country parishes, by such of the clergy of the times (of whom there were not a few) as were incapable of preparing sermons themselves. Now we have "*Homiletics*"—the art of making a homily! We endow even departments in learned institutions for the express purpose of teaching this art.

But are there not, it will be asked, certain proprieties of pulpit discourse? and if so, why not put them into scientific form, and *teach* them? There are, undeniably, such proprieties; but so far as they differ from the ordinary rules of oratory, they are the proprieties which are intuitive, instinctive, we were about to say, to sincere common sense. There are proprieties about the conversation of your hearth, your intercourse with your children, or your sorrow over their coffins; but would you study them as an art?

We believe, in fine, that the overweening and fastidious elaborateness with which theology and its ministration in the pulpit have been wrought—the one into a science, the other into

an art—are illegitimate to their original purity and popular character, and are detractions—the chief detractions, we are inclined to think—from their popular acceptance and power. And this we are compelled to say at any risk of imputations of "radicalism."

We believe, further, that a change, not much short of a revolution, is to occur in these respects before the world is much older; that dogmatic standards are to give way generally before the supremacy of the one only infallible standard—"the oracles of God;" and that the ministration of these oracles from the pulpit is to be reformed from many of its factitious peculiarities, and made again what it was among the apostles and their immediate successors—earnest, simple, powerful address—hortative talk, if we may so call it—modeled after no school, and without technical forms. There has been a slow, but sure progress toward these reforms ever since the Reformation, especially in respect to the subject matter of religious instruction. For a thousand years before that epoch, the higher mind of Christendom was absorbed in metaphysical theology. The "Schoolmen" were about the only thinkers of the "dark ages;" and what thinking was theirs! Whether most

profound or most absurd, it is difficult to say? But how has the good common-sense of the emancipated mind of the Protestant world leaped out of this maelstrom! How has time swept away the "scholastic" speculations! and what theologian could now, without exciting a smile, quote the authority of Lanfranc or Anselm, Duns Scotus or Abelard, Thomas Aquinas or William of Ockham? What has theology now to do, or will it ever again have to do, with the doctrines of Plato, or the dialectics of Aristotle?* This reform in scientific divinity is still slowly advancing, and will go on, we believe and pray. Dogmatic speculation and bigotry in theology will decline, but not real learning. There is vastly more genuine learning now among theologians than there *ever* was before; but it is showing the superior good sense which accompanies it by avoiding the old dialectics, and, to a good degree, the old metaphysics; and by confining itself mostly to Biblical criticism

* We do not forget the influence of Plato on Schleiermacher, Neander, and a few similar German minds; but such cases are rare and anomalous. It need not be said to the classic student that we do not deny the permanent literary rank of his noble writings; we affirm only that the special relation which they sustained to Christian theology for ages has ceased, and probably ceased forever.

—the *exposition* of *revealed* truth by learned research, rather than by original speculation.

The improvement we speak of is characteristic of our age, and one of those characteristics which belong not merely to its actual state, but to its *tendency*. It is, we repeat, to be further developed. And let us not fear it. Christianity will gain in purity and in power by it. If nine-tenths of all the dogmatic writings in theology now extant were to be at once burned up, it would be an *auto da fé* around which the Church might well sing a doxology. The pure, simple truth of the Bible could be read better in the light of that conflagration (and conflagration it would assuredly be) than in the "light which is darkness" that comes from their pages.

This improvement in the subject-matter of preaching has not been without effect on preaching itself. Technical or "homiletic" as the latter still is in its mannerisms, and dogmatic as it still is in its matter, who does not perceive its rapid improvement? The sermonic forms and style common among even the Puritans, would not be tolerated in this day. Testy as the reader may suppose our present criticism to be, we nevertheless write more in hope than in despondence. We believe that, divested of the facti-

tious peculiarities which still trammel it, the pulpit will yet become what the common sense of all men see, abstractly, that it ought to be, —the very throne of moral power in our world; and that its voice, like the trumpet which Moses describes so sublimely as echoing above the thunderings of Sinai, shall "wax louder and louder" through the world.

So far as this partial reform of preaching has advanced it will be found, like that of theology, to consist in a return (whether designed or not) to the earnest simplicity and directness of the early Church.

What was the primitive preaching? The ecclesiastical historians all agree in describing it as, in the language of Mosheim, "Exhortation to the people, neither eloquent [oratorical] nor long, but full of warmth and love,"—that is, full of genuine eloquence. This was the first form of the "Homily" as it was delivered, after the reading of the Scriptures, in the Christian assemblies, and was doubtless copied from the example of the synagogue, where our Lord, after reading, closed the book, sat down, and *talked* to the people. Mosheim notices the declension of preaching in the third century, and lays the blame partly at the door of Origen, that un-

fortunate metaphysical father, who was not only "the first, so far as we know, that made long discourses," but whose originalities, in other respects, seem destined ever to be recurring to vex the theological world.* The "Homily," in its more regular form, followed; but it was, in the preaching of the best of the fathers, a simple home-directed address to the people, generally in exposition of the lesson of the day. During the middle ages there was little real preaching. Ritualism took the place of most else in religion—not excepting morals themselves. After the Reformation preaching revived, and the Anglician "Homilies" were provided, as we have said, for the unlearned clergy and rustic congregations. The Puritan outbreak was the great era of preaching, so called; the stout-hearted iconoclasts of that movement left scarcely anything else in the public service of religion. Almost all ritual services being thrown away, the preacher had to supply their place by long prayers and long lectures. Splendid thinkers were those old Puritan divines, but what preachers! They abound in riches of thought, but their sermons are mosaics of gems in slate, or rather in burned clay, dry as the old

* See Rev. Mr. Beecher's new work, "The Conflict of Ages."

burned bricks of Nineveh. Ludicrous, almost, are the descriptions which remain of their tireless pulpit strains. We are lost in admiration at their determined persistence, and the equally determined patience of their hearers: both seemed resolute to weary out Satan if they could not otherwise make him fly. Burnet refers to a fast-day service, "in which there were six sermons preached without intermission." Philip Henry "used to begin at nine in the morning, and never leave the pulpit until about four in the afternoon; spending all that time in praying and expounding, and singing and preaching, to the admiration of all that heard him." John Howe "usually began at nine in the morning with a prayer of a quarter of an hour, read and expounded Scripture for about three-quarters of an hour, then prayed half an hour. The people then sung a quarter of an hour, during which he retired and took some refreshment. He then went into the pulpit again, preached another hour, prayed an hour, the people then sung a quarter of an hour, and a prayer of a quarter of an hour concluded the service."

Herculean, heroic was that in its way!—working indeed—if it was not even after the apostolic prescription in 2 Tim. ii, 15.

Sturtevant (who, as we shall show directly, should have been the last man to throw stones at these sturdy old sermonizers) can hardly restrain a smile at them, even in the midst of his own amazing labyrinth of Homiletic "divisions" and "subdivisions." He says, rather *naively*, "in application they were very extensive;" and then adds, "they often appropriate an entire sermon to this purpose; they give what they called uses of *information*, *examination*, *exhortation*, *reproof*, *encouragement*, and many other heads. Sometimes, previously to the exposition, they would invite their audience to follow them into certain prior considerations; to clear the way to the text. One of them favored the people with sixty or seventy previous considerations, and then said he was about to open the text! Thus, with all their excellences, they had great faults; they were too much addicted to the silly logic of their times; they shredded their texts into the greatest possible number of parts, and sometimes ran out into great lengths of reasoning. It will be your task to avail yourself of their excellences without copying their faults." And yet he acknowledges their unquestionable intellectual richness, and, in dismissing them,

drops a significant hint: "Many who are extolled as original preachers and men of genius, have obtained much of their reputation by modernizing our old authors." Very true, and in so doing they have, as usual, stolen not only the gems, but also the faults of these old divines. We owe what straight-jacket trammels still mar the naturalness and power of the pulpit mostly to the mannerisms of these strong-headed but saintly old "sermonizers."

In spite of the freer tendencies of the times, our text-books on Homiletics still contend as lustily for the technicalities of the sermon as the old French critics used to for the "unities" of the drama. Sturtevant himself is one of the latest authorities; his huge volume* lies before us at present, an appalling octavo of between six and seven hundred mortal pages, much of it small type, "*solid.*" Now, though it is hard to keep a sober countenance over this sight, we do soberly declare that had we a young mind, of any strong common-sense on the one hand, or fineness of faculty and sensibility on the other, to train for the pulpit, we should be expecting daily, as we conducted him through this monstrous text-book—this perverse

* "Preacher's Manual," an extraordinary misnomer.

abuse of a simple and sublime subject—to see him retreat from his purpose with irremediable disgust.

These more than six hundred pages are devoted exclusively to the technicalities of sermonizing. We almost perspire as we trace down the tables of contents. Our eye is arrested by the "divisions" of a subject—and here we have no less than "nine kinds of divisions:" the "Exegetical Division," the "Accommodational Division," the "Regular Division," the "Interrogative Division," the "Observational Division," the "Propositional Division," &c.; and then come the "Rise from Species to Genus," the "Descent from Genus to Species." And then again we have exordiums: "Narrative Exordiums," "Expository Exordiums," "Argumentative Exordiums," "Observational Exordiums," "Applicatory Exordiums," "Topical Exordiums," and, alas for us! even "Extra-Topical Exordiums." One's thoughts turn away from a scene like this spontaneously to the Litany, and query if there should not be a new prayer there.

But this is not all. Here are about thirty stubborn pages to tell you how to make a *comment* on your text, and we have the "Eulogistic Comment" and the "Dislogistic Comment,"

(turn to your dictionary, reader; we cannot stop in the race to define,) the "Argumentative Comment" and the "Contemplative Comment," the "Hyperbolical Comment," the "Interrogative Comment," and the list tapers off at last with what it ought to have begun and ended with, the "Expository Comment."

And even this is not all. Here is a section on the "Different kinds of Address," and behold the astute analysis:—"The Appellatory, The Entreating, The Expostulatory, The Remedial, The Directive, The Encouraging, The Consoling, The Elevating, The Alarming, The Tender, The Indignant, The Abrupt."

This is the way that the art "Homiletic" would teach us when and how to be "Tender," "Indignant," "Consoling," and even "Abrupt!" Nonsense!

Yes, "nonsense!" says any man of good sense in looking at this folly: a folly which would be less lamentable if it could only be kept to the homiletic professor's chair, but which has still an almost characteristic effect on pulpit eloquence—not only on the *form* of the sermon, but as a natural consequence on its very *animus*. This tireless author gives all these outlines as *practical* prescriptions. He even pre-

sents them in a precise formula. We must yield to the temptation to quote it. "There are," he says, "certain technical signs employed to distinguish the several parts of a discourse. The first class consists of the *principal divisions*, marked in Roman letters, thus:—I., II., III., IV., &c. Next, the *subdivisions of the first class*, in figures, 1, 2, 3, &c. Under these, *subdivisions of the second class*, marked with a curve on the right, as 1.) 2,) 3,) &c. Then, *subdivisions of the third class*, marked with two curves, as (1.) (2,) (3,) &c.; and under these, *subdivisions of the fourth class*, in crotchets, thus: [1,] [2,] [3.] As—

"I. Principal division.
1. Subdivision of first class.
1.) " " second class.
(1.) " " third class.
[1.] " " fourth class."

Mathematical this, certainly; some of Euclid's problems are plainer. As a "demonstration" is obviously necessary, the author proceeds to give the outline of a sermon on "*The Diversity of Ministerial Gifts*," from the text "*Now there are Diversities of Gifts*," &c. He has but two "General Divisions," but makes up for their paucity by a generous allowance of "Subdivisions." His "General Divisions" are, I. *Ex-*

emplify the Truth of the Text. II. *Derive some Lessons of Instruction*, &c.,—an arrangement simple and suitable enough for any popular audience, if he were content with it, but under the first head he has two "subdivisions," the first of which is reduced to *thirteen* sub-subdivisions, and one of these thirteen again to *seven* sub-sub-subdivisions! The second of his subdivisions is again divided into *eight* sub-subdivisions, while the "homily" (alas for the name!) is completed by a merciless slashing of the second "general division" into no less than *eight* subdivisions. The honest author, when he takes breath at the end, seems to have some compunctious misgivings about this infinitesimal mincing of a noble theme, and reminds the amazed student that though the plan should be followed "in the composition of a sermon," the "minor divisions" can be concealed from view in preaching; and he concludes the medley of nonsense with one sensible and very timely admonition:—"If a discourse contain a considerable number of divisions and subdivisions, care should be taken to fill up the respective parts with suitable matter, or it will be, indeed, a mere *skeleton*—bones strung together, 'very many and very dry.'"

We acknowledge that we ought to ask the pardon of the reader for obtruding upon him these minute follies; but we have wished to treat the subject in its matter-of-fact details, and to contribute, in the most practical way we could, to the progress of what we hope is a permanent reform, now going on in our pulpits. We have quoted for the purpose, from one of the most common works on Homiletics,* an author who, amid this egregious mass of nonsense, says, and with some truth, that he "passes over a great many" things discussed by one of his most noted predecessors, because the omitted matters, "treating of the manner of discussing different kinds of texts, are strictly learned and *critical*, and such *nice points* may be waived for the present!"

We cannot drop the allusion to these "Homi-

* And it is, we believe, considered one of the best also. Bridge's Christian Ministry is another favorite but formidable work, an octavo of about five hundred pages, somewhat less technical, but stuffed with useless common-places, which have the advantage, however, of being relieved by incessant and very choice quotations from the best writers, passages that sparkle like gems in a heap of dry scoriæ. This pious writer reminds us, by his talent at quotation, of old Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." There would be some danger of that malady in reading the book, were it not for its refreshing extracts.

letic" books without admonishing the young theological student to obstinately eschew them. Try not to masticate their dry husks. Turn to the rich mines of the great theological writers for intellectual resources; turn to the standard works on common oratory for the few simple principles of the art; for these alone are what you need, besides your common sense. If you have not common sense enough to guide you, with such simple aids, to a manly, befitting address,—if your natural faculties are not good enough to enable you to make a rational "comment" on your text without this drilling in the "eulogistic" and "dislogistic comments,"—then turn away from the altar—you have no right there. But, at all events, turn away from these "Homiletic" text-books; turn to your own heart, if you have nothing else, and evoke its common sympathies and common sense; these will be infinitely better than the Homiletic manuals; turn to ordinary books of taste and style, they are even better. You had better, like Chrysostom, "the golden-mouthed," go to sleep with old Aristophanes under your pillow than with these huge Homiletic phantoms haunting your dreams. Aristophanes gave the Byzantine bishop the purest example of the Attic dialect at

least; these Homiletic authors will give you neither rhetoric nor logic.

We have thus indicated, in part, the actual character of the sermon; its *critical form*, as a mode of discourse, as well as much of its *subject-matter*, needs, we think, no little reform. That reform is in progress, as we have admitted. It has advanced greatly in our day, so much, indeed, that the extreme use of the critical peculiarities, which were deemed by the Puritan divines almost essential to the sermon, would not now be tolerated by our congregations. Even the technical peculiarities which have been tolerated in the modern sermon are beginning gradually to disappear from the discourses of the first class of pulpit intellects, and it is to be hoped that before many years the "firstly," "secondly," and "thirdly"—the whole technical herd of "divisions" and subdivisions"—will, like the swine before the simple, powerful word of Christ, "run violently down a steep place into the sea" of oblivion, and "perish in its waters."

The usual plea that minute dissections help the popular mind to remember the discourse, is unfounded in fact. The clerical hearers, if any such be present, will remember them, so admirable a thing is "sermonizing" clerically consid-

ered; but these technical niceties are irksome to the people. Ask your common hearers what they remember of any given sermon; you will scarcely find a recollection of "firstly," "secondly," or "thirdly;" and as for the subtechnics, they have entirely escaped into the air. The people remember the main subject, the most natural and vivid illustrations of it, and the most powerful hortative points in the enforcement of it; but seldom or never its technical method.

Equally fallacious is the supposition that, by affording the preacher something definite to stand upon—a structure of thought—they secure to him that self-possession, that "freedom" so prized by the public speaker. If these technicalities constituted the real *preparation* of the discourse, there would be some truth in the supposition; but are they not usually only trammels upon it, curbing the freedom of the mind? "Freedom," as it is called, in public speaking, depends upon other and many conditions. No preparation can always secure it. He that is forever anxious for it will be likely the less to possess it. The sensibility that oftenest secures powerful eloquence is often, also, the cause of agitation and failure; and he that would be powerful in the pulpit must be

resigned to occasional defeats. But let him not care for that; one untrammeled, thrilling, sweeping discourse, is worth half-a-dozen dry, respectable homilies, and a man of genuine eloquence will soon come to be recognized as such, notwithstanding his failures; nay, the latter will come to be considered by his hearers —whether by their favoritism or their criticism —as the enhancing contrasts of his successful efforts—the shades of the picture.

There are, unquestionably, as we have said, proprieties of pulpit discourse as of any other discourse; but there are none, that we can conceive of, peculiar to it except the peculiarly religious spirit, and the warmer, higher eloquence which that should insure. The few general principles of eloquence which are applicable to all oratory are all that need be sought for the pulpit. The sermon should be relieved of useless technical peculiarities; of everything peculiar to it, in fine, except its higher moral tone; and, placed upon the same platform with all other sound popular eloquence, be allowed there untrammeled play. When thus emancipated it will have its legitimate power.

What would be the fate of any popular, or

forensic, or senatorial orator, who should adopt the stringent artificialities of the sermonizer?

Clergymen, elevated though they truly are as a class, cling closely to class opinions, and it is perhaps inevitable under their circumstances. Their own estimate of pulpit ability tends to perpetuate the defects of the pulpit. The man that stirs the soul, that moves the multitude, that speaks in the desk as he would in the vestry or on the platform—naturally and powerfully—he is not usually considered by his clerical brethren the really *great preacher;* he is the "poet," the "elocutionist," the "revivalist." He *is* "the great preacher," nevertheless. Let him be content; for God, and the good common-sense which God has put into the common mind, will always recognize him as such. There are two classes which, we apprehend, usually pass clerical criticism as "great preachers," viz.: the great "sermonizers,"—men who most effectually *mechanize* a discourse, shackling it with strict distinctions; and, on the other hand, those who can most elaborately speculate out a dogmatic subject—men of powerful thought, but who display that power more in the handling of a difficult topic than in the control of the popular mind—the sweeping, renovating

sway over the conscience and life of the multitude, which is really the highest power on earth —the power which the Holy Ghost himself descends from heaven to exert. In both these respects the pulpit will be revolutionized in less than a hundred years from to-day. "That which metaphysical preaching teaches," says Dwight, "may be true, and the arguments used to support it may be sound; but the distinctions are so subtile, and the reasoning so abstruse and difficult, that the hearer's attention to the truth is lost in his attention to the preacher's ingenuity; his mind prevented from feeling what is intended, by the absorption of his thoughts in the difficulties of the argument, and his heart chilled by the cold manner in which all such discussions are conducted. The metaphysician, whether aware of it or not, is employed in displaying his own ingenuity, and not in disclosing and confirming the truth of God."

"The plain and easy way of preaching," says Robinson in his notes on Claude, "is wonderfully adapted to the capacities, and inclinations, too, of a multitude of hearers; and such a method, purged of artificial logic, will one day or other, it is hoped, universally prevail."

ESSAY II.

DEFECTS OF MODERN PREACHING, AND THEIR REMEDIES—CONTINUED.

The Literary Rank of the Sermon — Its lack of Popular Interest — Reason of it — Lack of Moral Power — What should be the Power of the Pulpit?

In answering the question, *What is the actual character of our preaching?* we have referred to defects in both the subject-matter and the critical form of the sermon.

Mostly owing to these defects is it, perhaps, that sermons constitute so small a staple in our popular literature. They have been published abundantly; but they do not last long, and have little influence while they do last. It was estimated, twenty years ago, that there were at least a million printed sermons in our language;* this estimate did not include the published sermons of this country; add to it these, together with the vast issues of the kind in Enggland since the calculation, and the number must swell immensely. Yet how few on this prodigious list have any popular currency, or

* Sutcliffe's "Notes to Osterwald."

will ever be reprinted! A critic in the *Edinburgh Review* (Oct., 1840) expresses surprise that "there should be so small a proportion of sermons destined to live; that out of the *million* and upward, preached annually throughout the empire, there should be so very few that are remembered three whole days after they are delivered—fewer still that are committed to the press—scarcely one that is not in a few years absolutely forgotten. If any one," continues the reviewer, "were, for the first time, informed what preaching was—if, for example, one of the ancient critics had been told that the time would come when vast multitudes of persons should assemble regularly, to be addressed, in the midst of their devotions, upon the most sacred truths of a religion sublime beyond all the speculations of philosophers, yet in all its most important points simple, and of the easiest apprehension; that with those truths were to be mingled discussions of the whole circle of human duties, according to a system of morality singularly pure and attractive; that the more dignified and the more interesting parts of national affairs were not to be excluded from the discourse; that, in short, the most elevating, the most touching, and the most interesting of all topics

were to be the subject-matter of the address, directed to persons sufficiently versed in them, and assembled only from the desire they felt to hear them handled—surely the conclusion would at once have been drawn, that such occasions must train up a race of the most consummate orators, and that the effusions to which they gave birth must needs cast all other rhetorical compositions into the shade." So it would seem *à priori;* but how otherwise is the seeming *à posteriori?* The reason of the fact we are not now to discuss; it will come before us hereafter; the fact itself is unquestionable. Is there, indeed, any other department of literature which yields comparatively so few permanent productions? And is there anything, of a merely critical character, that would more effectually impair the literary pretensions of any other productions of the pen than a liability to the charge of its having the mannerisms or general style of the sermon? In this country the pulpit has made ample contributions to the press; but how many of its productions will be permanent? How many American sermons which have been published within the present generation will be read at all by the next? We cannot enumerate more than two authors who

will probably have this honor, and they will have it, not because their productions are sermons, but in spite of that fact.

Sermons, in fact, are proverbially dull reading. If they have any popular currency at all, it is usually because of some local or temporary occasion. When they discuss the peculiar topics of the pulpit alone, though these are confessedly the grandest themes of human thought and solicitude, they generally fail of popular acceptance through the press. Clergymen, we suppose, are the chief readers, now-a-days, of printed sermons,—somewhat, probably, after the manner of Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain. The old standard works of the kind—many of them voluminous, and not a few of them replete with ability—are becoming daily more confined to clerical libraries. Except when sustained by some historical or other extraordinary prestige, like those of Wesley or Luther, they are seldom found in the homes of the common people. On the shelves of more cultivated families or literary laics they may occasionally be detected in an obscure and dusty corner, but less and less commonly even there. In public libraries they form the most undisturbed resting-places for venerable spiders and book-worms.

And this fact is certainly not altogether owing to a lack of interest in the subjects proper to sermon literature; it is owing to the critical peculiarities of the sermon. The people read extensively on those subjects; they are a moral, a constitutional demand of human nature. There are but few others that engage equally their attention, but they require them in a different form. They read them in religious biographies, in manuals of practical religion, in essays even,—in any shape rather than the sermon. And if a volume of sermons has any considerable popular circulation now-a-days, it is because either of some characteristic deviation from the old sermonic form and style, giving it the title of a special book, like Jay's "Exercises," or his "Christian Contemplated," Beecher on "Intemperance," or Cheever's "Windings of the River of Life," or else by reason of some special provocatives of ability or heresy, like the discourses of Channing or Parker.

Kindred to this view of the subject is another, viz.: *the comparatively little popular interest which is felt in the sermon as delivered from the pulpit.* Dr. Johnson ascribes the lack of success, among writers of religious poetry, to the sacredness, the spiritual elevation of their

themes, which our sentiments of religious reverence will not allow to be treated like other subjects. There may be some truth in the remark, and it may have some pertinency to the subject before us. There is also, we apprehend, a still more profound reason for this lack of interest in both religious poetry and religious discourse, viz.: the natural repugnance of depraved human nature to whatever is holy—that is, whatever is unlike itself. This, we think, a truer solution of the problem than that assigned by Johnson. But, allowing for the influence of these considerations, is not the comparatively slight interest which accompanies preaching still an amazing fact? And is it not manifestly owing, in a great measure, to the peculiar style and mannerisms of the pulpit? The preacher, many of whose hearers, on the Sabbath, are asleep, and the greater proportion at least half asleep, finds no difficulty on the week-day night in keeping them thoroughly awake by the less technical discussion of an infinitely less important subject, in the town-lyceum. Why is this difference between the religious congregation and any other popular assembly so marked? The inattention, the vacant faces, the drowsiness almost habitually seen in the Sabbath assembly would

be quite anomalous in the scientific or literary lecture-room, the theater, the concert, the legislature, or the court-room. However dull the subject in the latter, still it will command more interest; the manner of its presentation, its style, all its accompaniments, seem more natural and more readily take up the attention. This, we repeat, is the main secret of the difference. The mannerisms of the pulpit have a pervading influence through all its ministrations; they subtly affect the very utterance of most preachers; and even men of culture and manly sense often have in the sacred desk tones which, if used in a literary lecture, would produce either a general titter, or a general stupor. It is quite fallacious to say that these tones and other mannerisms are the effect of the greater solemnity of the pulpit. We must be excused from stopping to answer any such plea; the less said about it the better.

Of course we do not affirm that these defects and this consequent lack of popular interest in the preached sermon are universal. But are they not general? Do they not to a great extent give character to the performances of the pulpit? The late Professor Ware, jr., (in the best treatise we have in favor of extemporaneous

preaching,) has much to say on this dry, rigid, stupefying oratory, if oratory it can be called. "When a young man," he remarks, "leaves the seclusion of a student's life to preach to his fellowmen, he is likely to speak to them as if they were scholars. He imagines them to be capable of appreciating the niceties of method and style, and of being affected by the same sort of sentiment, illustration, and cool remark, which affects those who have been accustomed to be guided by the dumb and lifeless pages of a book. He therefore talks to them calmly, is more anxious for correctness than impression, fears to make more noise or to have more motion than the very letters on his manuscript; addressing himself, as he thinks, to the intellectual part of man; but he forgets that the intellectual man is not very easy of access, and must be approached through the senses, and affections, and imagination. There was a class of rhetoricians and orators at Rome in the time of Cicero, who were famous for having made the same mistake. They would do everything by a fixed and almost mechanical rule—by calculation and measurement. Their sentences were measured, their gestures were measured, their tones were measured; and they framed canons of judgment and taste, by which

it was pronounced an affront on the intellectual nature of man to assail him with epithets, and exclamations, and varied tones, and emphatic gesture. They censured the free and flowing manner of Cicero as 'tumid and exuberant,' *nec satis pressus, supra modum exultans et superfluens.* They cultivated a more guarded and concise style, which might indeed please the critic or the scholar, but was wholly unfitted to instruct or move a promiscuous audience; as was said of one of them, *oratio—doctis et attente audientibus erat illustris; a multitudine autem et a foro, cui nata eloquentia est, devorabatur.* The taste of the multitude prevailed, and Cicero was the admiration of the people, while those who pruned themselves by a more rigid and philosophical law,

'Coldly correct and critically dull,'

were frequently deserted by the audience in the midst of their harangues."*

The most popular preachers of any period, it will be found, are such as, by the impetuosity of their feelings, or the power of their genius, break over most of these professional habits. Whitefield, we may suppose, was the greatest pulpit orator of modern ages. The remains of

* Middleton's Life of Cicero, iii. 324.

his sermons, (wretched as they are,) and all traditions respecting his eloquence, show that he defied artificial restraints in the pulpit, and poured his soul out spontaneously, irrepressibly, upon the people, often using language and gestures which would startle the staid and self-reverent dignity of the modern desk. Ware ascribes much of the peculiar power of Chalmers to a similar cause. "He abandoned the pure and measured style, and adopted a heterogeneous mixture of the gaudy, the pompous, and colloquial, offensive to the ears of literary men, but highly acceptable to those who are less biased by the authority of a standard taste and established models. We need not go to the extreme of Chalmers—for there is no necessity for inaccuracy, bombast, or false taste—but we should doubtless gain by adopting his principle. The object is to address men according to their actual character, and in that mode in which their habits of mind may render them most accessible. As but few are thinkers or readers, a congregation is not to be addressed as such; but, their modes of life being remembered, constant regard must be had to their need of external attraction."

Look around you and see who are the most interesting preachers—most interesting to the

masses. Are they not such—whether intellectually eminent or not—as substitute, in the place of the stereotyped mannerisms of the pulpit, their own natural characteristics! Even if some of these characteristics are defects, yet by being personal rather than functional—by their *naturalness* they take hold on the interest of the people, and by securing that they secure attention and effect.

What is thus true of individuals is true also of denominations. The Christian bodies which have greatest sway of the popular mind are those whose ministries are least habituated to artificial homiletic restraints; such as itinerate, preaching in private houses, barns, camp-meetings, &c., and are therefore less trammeled by the prescriptive decorums of the pulpit; such as extemporise, and are therefore more natural in style; such it must be acknowledged, as are not professionally educated, and therefore ill destitute of many mental advantages, have yet the great one of being themselves, and not copies of scholastic and Procrustean models. The fact is unquestionable; it is written out on the whole geography of our own country. It implies no reflection against ministerial education, but only against ministerial miseducation.

One more view of the subject. It will hardly be denied that the *moral power* of the pulpit is nothing like what, *a priori*, we should suppose it ought to be. Decided as many of our remarks may have seemed thus far, the reader will do us the justice to acknowledge that we have been disposed to give them all due qualification. In referring to the present point we would not speak unguardedly; we believe the Christian ministry has exerted, and is exerting, a salutary and incalculable influence on the mind of all Protestant countries, and especially of our own. Without political support, it has covered the land with religious institutions. If at any one time it can be said that religion makes but little relative progress among us, still it is a mighty service to maintain it in its wonted status, and this is done, officially, at least, by the Christian ministry. No professional men receive a less average salary.* None do harder work, none wield a more positive and salutary influence. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the candid observer cannot deny that they give impulse and guidance to most, if not all,

* The average salary of clergymen in the United States was estimated at $350 at the time these articles were written; it is now about $450.

the charities and beneficent enterprises of the people. Still, is it not the case that most of this invaluable influence flows from extra pulpit labors? Does the pulpit, in itself considered, exert the power which its commanding position justifies? We reply with an unhesitating negative.

What is that position? The pulpit is omnipresent among the people. It stands on a basis of divine authority. Its batteries cover with their evangelic fire almost every point of the moral field of the land. They are manned by men who are mostly trained expressly for their position, and who avowedly enter upon it with the spirit of self-sacrifice, of moral heroism, and, if need be, of martyrdom. They have one-seventh, and generally more, of the time of the people in which to utter to them their appeals. These appeals take hold upon all the great solicitudes of life, death, and eternity. The moral constitution of human nature instinctively recognizes them. Under such circumstances what ought to be the power, the sublime demonstrations of the pulpit? If such a theater of eloquence and influence had been hypothetically described to Cicero or Demosthenes, what would have been his judgment of its capacity for popular effect? Would he not sup-

pose that its sublime, its universal, and ever reiterated appeals would resound through a nation like trumpets from heaven; that it would dominate over and cast down all public evil influences; that it would exhibit an heroic example of self-conscious strength and independence of public prejudices; that its verdict uttered on any public question which involved moral relations would be irresistibly decisive, and that its thunders would beat down and dispel everywhere oppression, war, intemperance, the rife corruptions of business, of fashionable, and even of political life? that it would, in fine, do what its great Founder expressly designed it should do—morally renovate mankind?

Does it do so?

Will it ever do so, without being first renovated itself?

We have thus answered somewhat our first question respecting the actual character of the pulpit. It does not wield its legitimate moral power; it is deficient in popular interest; it contributes little of intrinsic value to literature; it needs improvement in much of the subject-matter, and in the critical form of its discussions.

Why is it so? is a question which remains to be considered.

ESSAY III.

INEFFICIENCY OF THE PULPIT—FURTHER CAUSES OF IT AND THEIR REMEDIES.

The Pulpit too Limited in the Application of its Habitual Themes — The "Evangelistic" Pulpit, its Defects — The "Rationalistic" Pulpit, its Lack of Moral Power — The "Preaching of Christ" — The Freedom of the Pulpit — How can it be Regained? — Challenged by the Infidelity of the Day.

We have discussed the defects of the modern pulpit—defects in both the subject-matter and the critical form of the sermon—its slight contribution to our permanent literature—its lack of popular interest—its lack of moral power. Why is it so? is the question which remains to be answered.

The pulpit fails to apply sufficiently to current events, and common life, the great evangelical principles which are its habitual themes. And herein, we think, will be found a chief reason of its lack of both popular interest and moral power. Our actual preaching presents two extremes in this respect, the *Evangelistic* and the *Rationalistic;* and, as usual, the right course will be found about midway between them.

The former incessantly repeats the great elementary truths of inward religion—repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, sanctification, &c. And these are, indeed, the real elements of power in Christian theology—the most legitimate themes of preaching. They should enter directly or indirectly into all preaching, and the desk where they are not familiar subjects is shorn of the distinctive strength and brightness of the pulpit. Our objection, then, is not to their habitual reiteration, but to the want of a more *specific application* of the moral standard which they imply to *common life, and to the current events and even the public questions of the day.* Cannot this pure and powerful "evangelism," now so continually exhibited in our stricter pulpits, and yet so almost exclusively applied to the church altar or the vestry meeting, the closet or the inward life of the individual,—can it not be brought out more into the arena of ordinary life, and its sanctifying power be made to reach all interests of men? That is the question.

And that is the grandest question that we think can be put to the Christian world in this day. Most certainly the metaphysical, the dogmatical, and (if we may use the word) the

strategetical managements, heretofore not uncommon to the Church, are soon to be obsolete. Their day is fast departing, and all good men should pray God to speed it. Evangelism, as contrasted with "Ecclesiasticism," is hereafter to be the true form of the kingdom of God on earth, as it was during the first century and a half. The pulpit should be aware of the fact, and hail it with welcomes. While by the application of the great vital truths above mentioned, it aims at the cure of the individual soul as its immediate end, it should also demand a still larger sway for them; it should insist that they are applicable to all the external life of the times, as well as to the "interior life" of individual Christians—are the tests of all moral questions, public as well as private—that, in fine, the essential "spirituality" of the Christian religion is its only law for all human conduct.

Is it not the capital defect of the Church of our times, that it admits, tacitly at least, a distinction between its ethics and its spiritual life, —contracting the latter (with the idea that it is "enshrining" it) to its own altar, or to private life, and seeming to allow the former to be alone applicable to the exterior or common life. And is not this the reason that saintship—not

obscure at our altars or in our vestries—is so undistinguishable in the mart, or on 'change, or even in ordinary social life?

This defect comes of our defective preaching. Our more evangelic pulpit is forever reiterating the elementary truths referred to,—it defines them, and urges them; but fails in the largeness of their application. Religion, primarily a personal matter, becomes exclusively so. The religious life of the individual is defined off into a sanctification that pertains too much to the Sunday pew, or the vestry meeting, the closet, or even the moral pathology of his secret emotions.

And hence it is that our congregations sleep so soundly under what is called orthodox preaching. They know, when the subject is announced, what the tenor of the discourse will be; its spiritualizations or etherializations have become common-places to most of them.

And hence, also, is it, that the preaching of these high and holy truths have so little practical effect beyond the mere personal limits described. Men believed to be sincerely devoted to their "Church and closet duties" mingle almost undistinguishably with the godless multitude in those habits of business, those stratagems (not to use a worse word) of political party,

and customs of social life, which these great truths, rightly applied, would annihilate.

And hence, also, comes that astonishing anomaly, that, during periods when these vital truths have been thoroughly exhibited, in their mere personal applications, great public evils, no more reconcilable with them than light with darkness—such as war, intemperance, the slave-trade—have nevertheless prevailed, and been scarcely questioned. But when we drag such evils forth into the light of our Christian altars, how do they start up into gigantic apparitions of immorality, to be denounced and thundered down by the oracles of our God?

Let then the "evangelical" pulpit ever hold up, with a high and energetic hand, these great lights of truth; but not to shed their quickening illumination merely within the surrounding altar or the individual soul, but out, far out upon all life. Let it affirm that "holiness to the Lord" is the only morality it recognizes, because the only morality promulgated from the Ruler of the universe; that "holiness to the Lord" is not an admonition merely for the altar or the closet, but for the place of business, the political canvass, the public office, the social company, the deck of commerce, and (if so

startling a thought is admissible) the field of battle—for if men cannot be holy in fighting they ought not to fight. Let it apply its "evangelism" to these and other practical topics—what then would be its moral power? What then the variety and freshness of its themes, and the interest with which the now sleeping multitudes would look for its discussions?

What may be called the *Rationalistic pulpit* among us, errs in the opposite extreme. In its fear of being too theological it has become almost purely didactic. It delights in ethical and often in even esthetical themes. We give it credit for many accomplishments; it is polished and scholarly, and of a very beneficent tone, and hitherto of remarkably unsullied moral character; but what is its moral power, especially over the masses? And can we even conceive of its ever wielding a moral power which can reach the great stout heart of our common depraved humanity or startle the common conscience? By its Rationalistic views of divine retribution, it has abandoned the power "to persuade men" by "the terrors of the Lord;" and by divesting Christ and his mission of their highest significance, it has lost the chief argument of the "goodness of God," which "should

lead men to repentance." It has broken away, very happily, from the old homiletic technicalities of the sermon; but its prelections have generally become mere "essays" on the moralities of life. Some of them are commendably, some even heroically bold in their application of the Christian ethics to public questions; but the great elements of life and power in Christianity are wanting, and they "fight as one that beateth the air." Channing, Worcester, Greenwood, Dewey, Bellows, Osgood, Chapin, and their associates, have given us some of the most beautiful and also some of the most conclusive elucidations of Christian morals ever written; and Parker and his class, with all their heresies, wage heroic war against some public vices; but have they ever routed the enemy or shaken one of his positions? Do their Rationalistic dissertations ever break up the great deep of the hearts of hardened men? Do you ever hear of even an individual conscience powerfully awakened by them, of a libertine reclaimed, of an infidel blasphemer convinced, and made to smite upon his breast and cry out, God be merciful to me, a sinner? It would, indeed, be singular if these, or even less direct means, did not have some moral effect; for a temperance

speech may reclaim a drunkard from his one bad habit, but do ever individual cases of moral *renovation*—of change from vice or even indifference to profound penitence and to an earnest consecrated life, occur under this partial exhibition of the truth? The question is not whether devout men coming under such a ministration through accident, speculative error, or otherwise, may not continue devout, that is not a relevant point here, but is it a ministration of "salvation," of moral recovery to the lost, even in individual cases? And as to its public influence, was there *ever* a case known in which the attention of a vicious or heedless community was powerfully arrested and impressed by it, as has been the fact not merely under the ministry of great leaders of the Evangelical school—Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, and Davies—but is commonly the case in most towns and villages in which are found Evangelical Churches, however humble? Can it be said of its "Rationalistic" prelections, without a feeling of the almost ludicrous inaptness of the language, that they are "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," that they are that "word of God" which "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing

even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?" And can any thoughtful man suppose, for a moment, that such a ministration of Christianity is the one ordained from Heaven to beat back and finally overthrow the terrible energies of moral evil in our world?

No, no; it has some of the appliances of the truth, but not their central energy. "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" is the fact in which inheres that central energy. It is not a mere sentiment of "evangelistic" fervor, but the highest dictate of a right "rationalism" that subordinates all the ethical claims of Christianity to a personal and persevering faith in Christ himself, uniting the soul to him as the ingrafted branch to the vine; loving him because he first loved us; receiving his adorable name with those of the Father and the Spirit in baptism; meeting him in our Christian assemblies of even "two or three;" praying to him as did the dying Stephen; "worshiping him" with "all the angels" who themselves were made by him; trusting in him as "our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," and refusing every other

name given among men as the title of salvation. Christ, the creator, by whom "all things were made," and yet the sufferer who "bore our sins,"—the great *teacher*, but the greater *redeemer*—Christ in Gethsemane and in the highest heaven—Christ on the cross and on the throne of the universe—Christ paramount over all things in heaven or earth, to the trusting and adoring affection of the renewed heart—this is the foundation and the culmination of all Christian truth. What is Christianity without him but a mockery? A mockery of our weakness and despair would it be, indeed, were it not for this its characteristic doctrine, with its accompanying supernaturalism of faith and grace; for in that case the very purity of its ethical system would become its most formidable difficulty. Of the mere morals of Christianity can be affirmed, what cannot be said of any heathen or infidel ethical system, that they are, of themselves, impracticable. The sermon on the mount is above the capability of human nature—it is a mockery, we repeat, of our weakness, if those doctrines of grace which are distinctive of the evangelical school and inseparable from the Messianic office, are not recognized as its essential conditions. The Scripture sentiment

expresses a deep fact in the philosophy of our spiritual nature,—"Without me ye can do nothing—I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

What then is the true preaching of Christianity? Not that which deals only in the moral lessons of the Great Teacher on the one hand; nor that, on the other, which treats forever of the special graces of the Spirit, the "gifts" procured by him for men. Not that which sends the inquirer with Nicodemus to Jesus by night to learn of the inward regeneration, and then to be scarcely distinguishable on the morrow among his unbelieving associates; but that which, sending him thither, sends him, ever after, a renewed man, along with the apostolic band, in the footsteps of Jesus; which never forgetting Christ on Calvary, forgets him not also on the mountain side, repealing traditional lies and teaching the lowliest charities; at the wedding of Cana consecrating harmless festivity; amid the people overwhelming their hypocritical teachers with the most terrific denunciation ever recorded (Matthew xxiii;) in the temple, scourge in hand, overturning the tables of the money changers; in the field, feeding the hungry multitude, not only with the bread of

life, but with "food convenient for them;" on the public road, not fearing, at the fitting time, to denounce the godless sovereign of the land in terms even of indignant satire.

Such was Christ as Teacher and Saviour, and such is the true application of Christianity to the world.

The man whose ministry gives it such an application will never lack hearers: he will be interesting; he will be powerful; he will keep the minds and consciences of men astir; he will have both friends and enemies; and both will alike sustain in him the consciousness that he is not living in vain.

First, then, to deal more with *current interests and questions* in the pulpit; and, secondly, to apply to them not merely *the didactics, but the highest forms of evangelical truth*, are what the preaching of our day needs, to give it at once popular interest and power.

We do not say that this is not done in instances—as in the case of Chalmers, who applied his noble evangelism not only to "mercantile life," but to science itself, as in his Astronomical Discourses—but we do say, that it is not generally characteristic of our modern preaching. And the pulpit has not only tech-

nicalized its discourses into dry homiletic forms, but also to a great extent circumscribed itself within a professional area of thought, into which the people venture once a week with, it is to be feared, less interest than they have for any other discussions, or any other public assemblies.

But would such latitude be allowed the pulpit? Most certainly it would, and it would secure it indefinitely more respect, as well as more interest and power. We believe the restrictions on the pulpit are mostly self-imposed; it has but to lay them aside to find the people speedily recognizing its right to discuss all subjects to which Christian truth has any relations. It would be subject to animadversions, to be sure, and so is the press; it would produce agitations, but these even it ought, to a certain extent, to covet, as its right and advantage; yet very soon would its appropriate freedom be conceded, and the people, instead of resorting to it to slumber over moral common-places, or spiritual generalities, would crowd to it with all their varieties of opinion, to hear with respect, if not with full concession, the matured opinions of the men whom they sustain for the purpose of the more thorough study of truth, and who, by their

professional isolation and sacred character, are placed beyond the sordid personal motives which affect its discussion in secular life. More freedom, we were about to say more frankness, on the part of the clergy would, we believe, be quickly understood and approved by the popular mind, especially in this country. We are not without individual proofs of the fact: where is there a man of true earnestness, who has taken the stand we have recommended, and who has not gained by it—gained in the number of his hearers, and the whole effectiveness of his ministrations?

Of course we presuppose here all those counsels respecting "good sense," "moderation," "discretion," &c.,—the convenient common-places of "a wise conservatism,"—with which a certain class of minds would have us round-off a discussion like the present. Unfortunately the danger seldom lies in the direction suspected by such caution-mongers, for most of the personal interests of the preacher will incline him otherwise. His office, too, and his professional tastes, are well adapted to produce habits of consideration and prudence, and the man who is not qualified to use in the pulpit aright the freedom we have recommended, has no right to be there.

We have been the more emphatic in urging these views upon the "Evangelical ministry," so called, because it is unquestionably the policy of the Rationalism and Infidelity of the day to place themselves in contrast with the Church in these respects. They are attempting to signalize themselves as the *practical reformers* of the times, not merely in matters which are yet in public controversy, but in admitted charities and reforms. A sentimental philanthropy is the very characteristic of modern infidelity; and let us have the honesty to say that, with many doubters, it is not a merely sentimental, but an earnest, working philanthropy. The Church and its ministry are incessantly assailed by scorners, and sometimes by honest but erring men, as responsible for the great grievances which yet afflict Christendom, and schemes amounting to a conspiracy for its overthrow are prosecuted as necessarily preliminary to their reform. All this may be called preposterous, to be sure; but it is not without its disastrous influence on innumerable minds among the young and ingenuous, as well as the decrepit in error and vice. We are disposed to think that it is among the most melancholy signs of the times. And these complaints extend not only

to public questions, but to the common immoralities and common evils of the Christian world. The Church is held responsible for them; she is challenged to purify the business, to remedy the pauperism, to educate the ignorance, to repress the prostitution, to expurgate the jurisprudence, and reform the politics of Christian lands. The challenge, with some qualifications, is a most rightful one. The Church cannot evade it; her moral power does not reach those evils as it should; the pseudo-philanthropy of her opponents cannot reach them at all, except to exasperate them by absurd experiments; the task is with the Church—let her accept the challenge, and the hour as the propitious occasion in which to show her "power unto salvation." Let her watchmen, especially, see if they cannot more effectually silence these clamors; if there is not more for them to do than they are doing, and a better way to do it.

ESSAY IV.

INEFFICIENCY OF THE PULPIT — A PLEA FOR EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

Reading not Preaching — Opinions in Favor of Extemporaneous Preaching — Its Compatibility with a Good Style and Close Thinking — Chalmers — European Example — The Classic Orators "Extemporizers" — The Anglo-Saxon Pulpit alone substitutes Reading for Preaching — Reading not tolerated in Senatorial or Forensic Oratory — Webster — Disadvantages of Sermon Writing to Clergymen — Defects of our Ministerial Training — The Appropriate Studies of an Orator — Cicero — Romilly — Thomas Scott — Dr. Arnold — A better Selection of Ministerial Candidates Necessary.

We have been endeavoring to account for the comparatively slight moral power and popular interest of modern preaching. Few things, we believe, detract more from the pulpit, in these respects, than the almost general substitution of *reading* for *preaching*, for they are not identical, any more than the letters of the one word spell the other.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, some few years ago, recommended extemporaneous preaching by a strong vote—the best writers on Homiletics have contended for it—even a Unitarian theological professor (the

younger Ware, of Harvard,) has written an entire book, and the best one we have, on the subject; the most successful ministry of our land has been almost exclusively made up of extemporizers; the arguments and authorities for it are, in fine, altogether preponderating, and yet how predominant is the clerical proclivity for manuscripts! Even the Methodist ministry, whose fathers filled the land with the thunders and triumphs of their powerful and natural eloquence, are beginning to ape the primness of academic readers, to turn their once resounding pulpit batteries into "desks" for manuscript prelections. Alas! who would have supposed it of *them?*—among whom it must be like the reed of the shepherd boy, on the mountain road, after the trumpet-blast of the careering herald, while yet the lingering echoes ring among the crags and heights.

Not only is extemporaneous preaching adapted to the themes and the effectiveness which we have demanded for the pulpit, but we contend that it is consistent with the best style of public discourse, with just thought and a sufficiently accurate verbal style. These latter excellences, of course, depend largely upon previous training, and the preparation of

the discourse; but it must be remembered also, that this is the case in regard to written sermons,—a speaker, without previous education, and thorough study of the discourse in hand, would hardly succeed better in reciting it, than in delivering it extempore.

He that would be a successful extemporizer should have a well-stored mind, and should thoroughly meditate his subjects; so thoroughly, indeed, that the whole perspective of the main ideas of his discourse, from the exordium to the peroration, shall be clearly open before his mental vision when he rises in the pulpit. This is requisite, for two reasons: first, that he may have something to say; and secondly, that he may have the confidence which will enable him to say it with self-possession and force. *Self-possession, based upon a sufficient preparation, is the whole secret of success in extemporaneous speaking.* A speaker thus sustained can hardly fail to have, spontaneously, the right language and due emotion; he has incomparably more facilities for them than the manuscript preacher. We say *right* language; and that is right which is appropriate to the occasion. It may not be as precise as the pen would afford, but ought it always to be so? Would it be de-

sirable, that the free, irregular but idiomatic facility of ordinary conversation should be superseded, at our hearths, by the finical precision and literary nicety of book-makers? There is a style for books, a style for conversation, and a style for the rostrum or the pulpit. He who rises in the latter, with his mind fraught with the ideas of his subject, and his heart inspired with its spirit, will, in most cases, spontaneously utter himself aright. If he is occasionally diffuse or repetitious, yet it may be legitimate to the occasion or the subject that he should be so. If his style may not *read* as well as it was heard, yet even this may be because of its peculiar adaptation to be heard rather than read.*

* The following brief, but very significant letter from Garrick to a theological student who had requested his advice on the subject, is a whole volume on oratory compressed into a paragraph :—

My Dear Sir.—You know how you would feel and speak in the parlour to a dear friend who was in imminent danger of his life; and with what energetic pathos of diction and countenance you would enforce the observance of that which you really thought would be for his preservation. You would be yourself; and the interesting nature of your subject impressing your heart, would furnish you with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, the most engaging features, and the most suitable and graceful gestures. What you would be in the parlor be in the pulpit, and you will not fail to please, to affect, to profit. Adieu. D. G.

We affirm further, that both the design and history of preaching are in favor of extemporaneous delivery. The earnestness and directness for which we have contended may consist, as we have shown, with all varieties of talents and topics, but it is hardly compatible with pulpit *reading*. Very rarely indeed does a powerful reader, like Chalmers, appear in the pulpit. We know not another case like his in the history of the Christian ministry. Chalmers tried the experiment of extemporizing in his country parish, but prematurely abandoned it; yet when in his full fame at Glasgow, his biographer says, that his occasional extemporaneous discourses, in the private houses of his poor parishioners, teemed with more splendid eloquence than ever dazzled the crowded congregation of the Tron Kirk.

The two greatest preachers of modern times, Whitefield and Robert Hall, were extemporizers —their written sermons were composed after delivery. Such a thing as a manuscript sermon is never seen in the pulpits of the continent of Europe, except when American or English clergymen happen to ascend them. If the continental clergy, Catholic or Protestant, write their discourses, they have, nevertheless, the

good sense to deliver them *memoriter*, and thereby save them from the dullness of reading. In like manner did the old and unrivaled pulpit orators of France—Massillon, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fletcher, Fenelon—eschew the manuscript.

The latter, in his "Dialogues on Eloquence," contends for extemporaneous speaking. He argues that even the classic orators were mostly extemporizers. There is much to be said on both sides of this question; the most probable supposition is, that the classic orators wrote their discourses, memorizing their substance, but delivering them without much regard to the written language. (*See Fenelon.*) Ware says, "Chatham's speeches were not written, nor those of Fox, nor that of Ames on the British treaty. They were, so far as regards their language and ornaments, the effusions of the moment, and derived from their freshness a power which no study could impart. Among the orations of Cicero which are said to have made the greatest impression, and to have best accomplished the orator's design, are those delivered on unexpected emergencies, which precluded the possibility of previous preparation. Such were his first invective against Catiline, and the speech which stilled the dis-

turbances at the theater. It is often said that extemporaneous speaking is the distinction of modern eloquence. But the whole language of Cicero's rhetorical works, as well as particular terms in common use, and anecdotes recorded of different speakers, prove the contrary; not to mention Quinctilian's express instructions on the subject. Hume, also, tells us from Suidas, that the writing of speeches was unknown until the time of Pericles."

The Anglo-Saxon pulpit, against all the predilections of that race, is, in fine, the only place where reading is tolerated as a mode of popular address. The member of parliament, or of congress, who should attempt to read his speech, would almost inevitably break down. The advocate at the bar, contending for the life of his client, would be considered recreant to all the urgency of the occasion were he to stand up before the jury to read his plea. The popular orator who should attempt to *read* the masses into enthusiasm, on some high occasion of national exigency, would be dubbed a jackass. Why can manly and powerful eloquence be successful everywhere else but in the pulpit? The pulpit is its most legitimate arena. The themes and aims of the pulpit are all

adapted to it. The religious congregation is the true popular assembly; and there, if anywhere, ought eloquence to appear in all its liberties and powers.

So almost intuitive is our perception of the inappropriateness of manuscript preaching to the popular religious assembly, that we cannot conceive of Christ *reading* his discourses to the multitudes of Judea; or Peter, on the day of Pentecost, or Paul, on Mars' Hill, preaching from a scroll. We *know* this could not have been, not from any historical testimony, but from the manifest absurdity of the supposition. For the same reason we cannot associate it with any really popular and demonstrative preaching.

Be assured, that he who can preach at all, can preach extemporaneously, if he will but persevere in the experiment. The young man of good education, who, from his academic habits or natural diffidence, or any other cause, is now addicting himself to pulpit reading, is putting his whole professional life under a servile restraint, which will not only consume unnecessarily large amounts of his time, but trammel the development of all his pulpit powers. Let him study thoroughly his subjects; but let him

devote to the storing of his mind the time now spent in mere verbal preparation for the desk; let him resolutely stumble along, through whatever embarrassments, till he acquires the confidence which habit will surely produce; let him understand well that what he wants for the pulpit is thought and sentiment, and that these secured, direct unpretending utterance, right home to the souls of the people, is the only true style for him—the noblest eloquence. If, in the experiment, he sometimes falls below the tame mediocrity of his former manuscript efforts, yet will he oftener rise transcendently above it, in the exulting freedom of an inspired and untrammeled mind.

One fact let him be assured of, namely, that whatever uniform and respectable character his manuscript preaching may have, the *maximum* power of preaching can never be attained by the sermon reader. He sacrifices all hope of this; and no young man should ever make that sacrifice. With God's commission upon him, with the Holy Spirit within him, with all the assistance of books and nature about him, with the solemnities of eternity before him, let him throw himself with all directness and energy into his work, speaking to the people in their own

strong and simple speech, seeking not to ape the rhetorician, but to save souls, "pulling them out of the fire;" he will then speak from his heart with infinitely more eloquence than he could utter from his manuscript.

We are earnest but not whimsical on this subject; there are doubtless occasions when a manuscript may be desirable in the pulpit, but they are rare—they should form the exception, not the rule. Why, in the name of all good sense, should the pulpit alone, of all places of popular discourse, be subjected to this stupid inconvenience?

The primness, the cold hollow dignity, so contrary to all spontaneous and popular sympathy and hearty religious feeling, which now characterize the pulpit, are, we repeat, attributable more to this cause and to the technical homiletic form of the sermon, than to any other. It is not *preaching*—it is an intolerable perversion of the idea. It is academic lecturing. It is an intellectual task, a dry literary exhibition in the wrong place, to wrong spectators, and performed in subjection to most servile usages and intolerable mannerisms.

Clergymen should banish it—throw it to the winds—not only for the good of the people, but

for their own relief.* It was unknown in the primitive Church for one hundred and fifty years; it is uncommon if not unknown now in ministries which sway the masses, as the Roman Catholic, the Baptist, the Methodist; it is unknown on almost all other occasions where a practical end, and not a mere literary exhibition is designed—the political assembly, the legislative hall, the court-room. If you would have the pulpit invested with its legitimate freedom and power, break down its factitious restraints, banish its technicalities, and cast away its scrolls. Nay, if the reader would not suppose us too radical, we would say, tear down the pulpit itself. "A lawyer," said Daniel Webster, "could never hope to gain his cause if he had to plead it boxed up in a pulpit." Jesus Christ

* Ware, in his preface, says, "There is at least one consequence likely to result from the study of this art [extemporaneous preaching] and the attempt to practice it, which would alone be a sufficient reason for urging it earnestly. I mean, its probable effect in breaking up the constrained, formal, scholastic mode of address, which follows the student from his college duties, and keeps him from immediate contact with the hearts of his fellow men. This would be effected by his learning to speak from his feelings, rather than from the critical rules of a book. His address would be more natural, and consequently better adapted to effective preaching."

and his apostles never saw a pulpit, unless the reading platform of the synagogue could be called one. They never took a text, tying their thoughts with a thread of bare verbalisms; Christ read the Prophet, and *sat down* and *talked* to the people. They knew nothing about "firstly," "secondly," and "thirdly;" they were too intent on their practical design to trifle with such dialectic nonsense. They *expounded*, to be sure, but not with these scholastic trammels—they talked, they exhorted, they thundered; and the awakened multitudes, consenting or scorning, were not concerned about *how* they preached, but *what* they preached. The manner could not but be right, and powerfully right, when spontaneous to the design.

We would have the people come to church, then, not expecting to hear, or rather sleep, under these intellectual prelections, but to hear fervent, practical, home-directed addresses respecting their duties; expositions, arguments, warnings, exhortations, applied to their common wants, to current events; to the individual, to the community, to the times: addresses, thoughtful but not technical; too direct and urgent for factitious mannerisms; delivered, if you please, sometimes from the pulpit, and sometimes, as

with the Papal priests, from the altar, down before the people; sometimes from a text, sometimes from the whole lesson, sometimes without reference to either; now on an abstract subject, now on a personal one, and now on a public question; urging men to their personal salvation, and meanwhile, and for this purpose, refuting all sanctioned lies, assailing all the corruptions of the day, whether in high places or in low places, and pleading all genuine reforms.

Amazing radicalism this! Yes, but just such, both in spirit and method, as that before which the priesthoods, the philosophical schools, the senates, and the thrones of the old classic heathenism fell. Such a restoration of primitive preaching would again "turn the world upside down," till it turned it right side up.

We believe further, that the *ministerial education*, or rather miseducation of the times, with the professional habits it entails, is a reason of the comparative inefficiency of the pulpit. Our clerical education is too Procrustean—it turns out too many poor results; so many, that a shrewd observer cannot but refer them to the defectiveness of the system as such. Thoughtful men, in the best-educated sects, begin to hesitate about theological schools; and we know

learned graduates of such schools, now leaders in the ministry, who feel almost disposed, at times, to wish our theological seminaries disbanded.' This is not the place for a close discussion of the question of theological education; but we would refer with emphasis to the necessity of a revision of the whole subject. 'Our candidates are drawn through a scholastic process—prolonged elementary studies, one or two years of preparation for college, four years in college, and three years under the rigors of technical divinity in the theological school; a process, from out of which they come intellectually attenuated, and rigid beyond recovery.' And then bear in mind what follows, on the present plan of manuscript *reading* instead of *preaching*. On graduating at last, they must betake themselves to sermon *writing;* two sermons a week at least, on the plan of the monstrous text-books we have denounced two weekly homiletic agonies in constructing "firstlies," "secondlies," and "thirdlies," out of what common sense remains within them, and out of the beautiful, simple sentences of Holy Scripture! 'How is it possible that men subjected to such professional rigors should not become professionally characterized and isolated!'

What time have they for those general studies —those "Humanities," as they were once called —which the best critics have pronounced necessary to the orator? Clergymen, perhaps more than any other professional class, need such studies, both for their mental health and their popular usefulness; but we are inclined to think have least opportunity for them.

The present topic is very intimately related to the preceding one; for not only is sermon *reading* bad in itself—the greatest detraction from the popular effect of preaching—but it is doubly an evil, as it requires sermon *writing*, and thus consumes, in the mere task of verbal preparation, the time that should be spent in various reading and thinking. "The minister," says Ware, "must keep himself occupied,—reading, thinking, investigating; thus having his mind always awake and active. This is a far better preparation than the bare writing of sermons, for it exercises the powers more, and keeps them bright. The great master of Roman eloquence thought it essential to the true orator, that he should be familiar with all sciences, and have his mind filled with every variety of knowledge. He, therefore, much as he studied his favorite art, yet occupied more time in liter-

ature, philosophy, and politics, than in the composition of his speeches. His preparation was less particular than general. So it has been with other eminent speakers. When Sir Samuel Romily was in full practice in the High Court of Chancery, and at the same time overwhelmed with the pressure of public political concerns, his custom was to enter the court, to receive there the history of the cause he was to plead, thus to acquaint himself with the circumstances for the first time, and forthwith proceed to argue it. His general preparation and long practice enabled him to do this, without failing in justice to his cause. I do not know that in this he was singular. The same sort of preparation would insure success in the pulpit. He who is always thinking, may expend upon each individual effort less time, because he can think at once fast and well. But he who never thinks, except when attempting to manufacture a sermon, (and it is to be feared there are such men,) must devote a great deal of time to this labor exclusively; and after all, he will not have that wide range of thought or copiousness of illustration, which his office demands and which study only can give. In fact, what I have here insisted upon, is exem-

plified in the case of the extemporaneous *writers* whom I have already named. I would only carry their practice a step further, and devote an hour to a discourse instead of a day. Not to all discourses: for some ought to be written for the sake of writing; and some demand a sort of investigation, to which the use of the pen is essential. But then a very large proportion of the topics on which a minister should preach have been subjects of his attention a thousand times. He is thoroughly familiar with them; and an hour to arrange his ideas and collect illustrations is abundantly sufficient. The late Thomas Scott is said for years to have prepared his discourses entirely by meditation on the Sunday, and thus to have gained leisure for his extensive studies, and great and various labors. This is an extreme on which few have a right to venture, and which should be recommended to none. It shows, however, the power of habit, and the ability of a mind kept upon the alert by constant occupation to act promptly and effectually. He who is always engaged in thinking and studying will always have thoughts enough for a sermon, and good ones too, which will come at an hour's warning." We differ from Ware in respect to the amount of prepa-

ration necessary, but we approve his general view of the subject.

"A clergyman," says the good and great Dr. Arnold, himself a noble example of what he taught, "requires, first, the general cultivation of his mind, by reading the works of the greatest writers, philosophers, orators, and poets; and, next, an understanding of the actual state of society, and of our own and general history, as affecting and explaining the existing differences among us, both social and religious." "It is for this reason," adds one of his reviewers, "that so few eminent critics are eminent preachers: criticism, to *be* eminent, requires a man to be exclusive and jealous in his devotion to it, and he cannot find time for wide and general reading. But miscellaneous knowledge is precisely what the preacher needs, not to criticise the sacred word, but to apply it to the circumstances of his age and to the hearts and habits of the living men and women in the congregation before him. The preacher, as such, can commit no more fatal mistake than to confine himself exclusively, or chiefly, to the reading of books of divinity. Such exclusive reading will inevitably narrow his mind and give it a sort of professional one-sidedness, that will show itself

not merely in his mode of thinking, but in his style of writing and speaking."*

We have at times heard some of our Methodist ministerial brethren complain of their "system," because, as they have thought, it interfered with homiletic study, by tempting the "itinerant" to content himself with a few "skeletons," whereas, were he stationary, he would have to make more. A most illogical inference, it seems to us. It is not the preparation or study of "skeletons" that the pulpit of this day needs; the want is more extensive culture, more varied capacity. Any "system" that relieves the preachers from technical preparations, and thereby allows him more time for general intellectual invigoration and varied study, is a blessing: the relief may be abused, to be sure, through mere indolence; but for that the individual, not the system, is responsible.

We dismiss the present part of our subject with one more remark, and a brief one. The Churches, especially of this country, if they would promote the effectiveness of the pulpit, must have more care in the *selection of young men for the ministry*, a suggestion which we submit to those very excellent, but, we fear, much

* Rev. Dr. M'Clintock.

abused "Education Societies," which are designed to aid young men through their ministerial training. The ministry not only affords the best opportunities for the best talent, but it involves some of the most critical trials that human responsibility knows. It is a sad infliction both on the Church and on the incompetent candidate himself, to thrust him into its formidable duties. There are now literally hundreds, if not thousands, of unemployed clergymen abroad in our country, while, at the same time, there is an equal number of unsupplied Churches. And such is the effect of the professional training we have mentioned, that a man once educated for the pulpit is scarcely fitted for any other vocation, except it may be that of teaching; if left without a call he must, therefore, suffer. Piety, in a young man, is too often taken as a guarantee of every other future requisite for the office; and it is melancholy to see with what eagerness devout mediocrity, if not inferiority, is pressed into this highest, most laborious, most awful sphere of human responsibility.

ESSAY V.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING—RULES FOR IT.

Examples of Extemporaneous Eloquence — Definition of Eloquence — Design of "Notes" — Design of Preaching — Diffidence — Its Advantages — Briefs in the Pulpit — Preventives of Embarrassment — Preaching memoriter — Selection and Arrangement of Subjects — Their Elaboration — Four Rules for Extemporizing.

THERE are occasions on which sermons written out and read, or delivered *memoriter*, may be admissible; but they are few, and the speaker ought always to be commiserated for the inconvenience of a task so irksome and so incompatible with that spontaneous play of thought and emotion which is absolutely necessary to true eloquence. Though admissible, we would not say this course is necessary, even on such occasions. The most important efforts of oratory have been extemporaneous. The classic orators spoke without manuscripts; their preserved orations, as we have shown, were mostly written after delivery. The greatest orators of the British senate did the same; and if we must except a few, like Burke, it will be found that they were not so much eloquent speakers as elegant writers.

The energetic and Greek-like eloquence of the American revolution was also extemporaneous. Occasions the most important and the most appalling, involving the fate of states, and presenting the most formidable contrasts of parties and speakers, have been met and triumphantly controlled in extemporaneous discourse; the speakers preferring to be unembarrassed by the particularities of verbal preparation. It may be doubted, indeed, whether the highest kind of eloquence can be otherwise attained: it is true, at least, that all the great masters of the art, Demosthenes and Cicero, Mirabeau and Chatham, Grattan and Curran, Henry and Webster, Whitefield and Hall, have been "extemporizers." There is, we admit, a species of dramatic eloquence, the eloquence of great actors on the stage, and of the French pulpit in the age of Louis XIV., which may be referred to as an exception. We would not, however, allow it to be even an exception. On the stage, it is generally but poetical recitation; and in the French pulpit it was a similar recitation of poetical prose, splendid, without doubt, in its way, but nevertheless, poetry rather than oratory. Poetry and eloquence are quite distinct, though often practically confounded.

If the highest efforts of public speaking have been extemporaneous, it is certainly to be presumed that the efforts of ordinary occasions can be.

Even in criticism and the literary lecture, Coleridge found it practicable and desirable to extemporize. Of his lectures on Shakspeare, Mr. Collier, who heard them, says, "that for the third lecture, and indeed for the remainder of the series, he made no preparation, and was liked better than ever, and vociferously and heartily cheered. The reason was obvious; for what came from the heart of the speaker went warm to the heart of the hearer; and though the illustrations might not be so good, yet being extemporaneous, and often from objects immediately before his eyes, they made more impression, and seemed to have more aptitude."

In the first edition of *Coleridge's Literary Remains* is a letter from him to Mr. Britton, in which he thus indirectly corroborates Mr. Collier's description of the delivery of his thoughts at his lectures:—

"The day of the lecture, till the hour of commencement, I devote to the consideration, What of the mass before me is best fitted to answer the purposes of a lecture? that is,

to keep the audience awake and interested during the delivery, and to leave a sting behind; that is, a disposition to study the subject anew, under the light of a new principle. Several times, however, partly from apprehension respecting my health and animal spirits, partly from my wish to possess copies that might afterward be marketable among the publishers, I have previously written the lecture; but before I had proceeded twenty minutes I have been obliged to push the MS. away, and give the subject a new turn. Nay, this was so notorious, that many of my auditors used to threaten me, when they saw any number of written papers on my desk, to steal them away, declaring they never felt so secure of a good lecture as when they perceived that I had not a single scrap of writing before me. I take far, far more pains than would go to the set composition of a lecture, both by varied reading and by meditation; but for the words, illustrations, &c., I know almost as little as any one of the audience (that is, those of anything like the same education with myself) what they will be five minutes before the lecture begins. Such is my way, for such is my nature; and in attempting any other I should only torment myself

in order to disappoint my auditors—torment myself during the delivery, I mean: for in all other respects it would be a much shorter and easier task to deliver them in writing."

Observing men, who may have little practice in an art which requires genius, are sometimes better judges of the principles of such an art than are its practical proficients; the latter are beguiled in their judgments by the facilities—the ready intuitions of genius. Genius acts instinctively, and seldom observes the process of its own operations. Hence good poets are seldom good critics; and genuine orators have seldom accurately defined their art. Goldsmith, who knew nothing of it from practice, but much from observation, has given us perhaps one of the best definitions. He says: "A man may be called eloquent who transfers the passions or sentiments with which he is moved into the breast of another." Again: "In a word, to *feel your subject* thoroughly, and to *speak without fear*, are the only rules of eloquence properly so called." He is more explicit in another passage: "Be convinced of the truth of the subject, be perfectly acquainted with the object in view, prepossess yourself with a low opinion of your audience,

and *do the rest extempore.* By this means strong expressions, new thoughts, rising passions, and the true style, will naturally ensue." Every successful "extemporizer" will give to the second passage the authority of an axiom. It may be stated as a fundamental, an all-comprehensive rule in eloquence—*feel and be fearless.* The third quotation is but an expansion of the second, with one very defective clause; it is not necessary, in order to "speak without fear," that the speaker should "prepossess himself with a low opinion of his audience;" far otherwise. The importance of his subject, the pre-eminence of better considerations and motives, (especially in the preacher,) and the consciousness of competent preparation, will lift him above the influence of fear much more effectually than an impression which, in most cases, must be false, and in all should be ungrateful to an elevated mind.

But how command this frame of mind—"*feeling and fearless?*" that is the question.

The advocate of notes proposes to protect himself, by their aid, from fear and embarrassment. This he may do to some extent, but almost invariably at the expense of the other condition—"*feeling.*" The minute verbal labor of the preparation, and the mechanical man-

nerisms of the delivery of manuscript sermons, can scarcely fail to impair the freshness and impetus of thought. The preacher may be didactive and instructive, but he can rarely be eloquent. This method may suit the professor's chair or the lyceum desk; but it is at variance with the spirit and intent of the pulpit. The people might as well read for themselves; they may find better sermons in their libraries. The pulpit ought to be didactive; but it ought to be more—it should be the fountain of *religious sympathies*, as well as religious instruction; it was designed to keep alive the spirit as well as the truth of Christianity in the world, and for this reason no proficiency of the people in Scriptural knowledge can supersede its appointed instrumentality. Preaching is not an adventitious appliance of Christianity, nor would we make it out a sacrament; yet it stands next to the eucharist and baptism—*the third great institution* of our religion, having as much authority and speciality as the sacraments; and were the Bible in every man's hand, still would it stand a high ordinance of God, a source of vivification and impulse to the Church, until the end of the world. *This is the main purport of the pulpit*—if not, then

the press or the religious academy can supersede it.

How can we reconcile with such views that cold and lifeless retail of religious truth from a manuscript, which is misnamed preaching? As we have heretofore remarked, it seems hardly less than ludicrous, to imagine Christ on the mount, Peter on the day of pentecost, or Paul on Mars' Hill, *reading a manuscript.*

If, then, the advocate of manuscripts can prevent embarassment or fear by them, (which is not unqualifiedly the case,) still he loses an advantage infinitely more important than the one he gains.

The alleged advantage is, we believe, the main design of the use of manuscripts in preaching It is not that the discourse may be more exact, more compact. It may be doubted whether this is desirable for popular assemblies; and extemporaneous discourse, with suitable preparation, will admit of the most consecutive thought. There are other and better reliefs from embarrassment, which we shall soon consider. Meanwhile, it may be remarked, that it is no serious reason for discouragement, especially to the young speaker. Animal courage seldom coexists with strong susceptibilities of the imagin-

ation or the heart. Few great captains have been eloquent. Few distinguished poets or orators have shown much bravery. Cicero declares that he always trembled before addressing an assembly. Demosthenes showed himself a coward, and Whitefield confessed himself one. Of all qualities, animal courage is the least allied to other excellences; and it will be observed, that of all public speakers, those braggadocios who fear nothing have generally the least of that sensibility which frequently makes a trembling man a son of thunder or an angel of consolation. Diffidence in the early career of a public speaker is therefore a good sign. It denotes sensibility; and without sensibility there is no eloquence. In time, it may be sufficiently subdued to have all its advantages without its disadvantages. And it will always have the one advantage mentioned by a classic and accomplished lawyer, the younger Pliny,—"A confusion and concern in the countenance of a speaker casts a grace upon all that he utters; for there is a certain decent timidity, which I know not how, is infinitely more engaging than the assumed self-sufficient air of confidence."

Our remarks thus far apply particularly to sermons entirely written. We object less, but

yet strongly, to the use of briefs *in the pulpit.* We can conceive of no reason for it except indolence or imbecility. It is habit, at first indulged, but at last fixed. Can it be supposed that a brief sketch, seldom occupying more than a letter-page, can be noted down and then studied, revolved, expanded in the mind, and yet not be sufficiently impressed on the memory to allow the speaker to dispense with his notes? If not, we cannot conceive how such imbecility of memory can coexist with the other mental qualifications which are deemed necessary for the Christian ministry. We know men of the weakest memories for verbal details, who, nevertheless, can study out sermons requiring an hour, or an hour and a half in delivery, so as to recall with accuracy every division, subdivision, illustration, and reference. We repeat, it is habit that leads to the necessity of briefs in the pulpit. The speaker who uses them fixes not in his mind the capital ideas as centers of association for the subordinate thoughts; but, on the contrary, stores his memory with the filling up, and then refers to his manuscript for the leading propositions. This course is contrary to the very philosophy of association, and must cost more labor than the opposite method—not

to speak of the interruption of thought and feeling occasioned by such references. Let him go into the pulpit with his subject printed on his memory in its length and breadth; let him see "through and through" it clearly; let him feel that nothing remains to be done but to deliver his distinct and glowing impressions; and will he not have more self-possession and more buoyant freedom than if he enters it with that vagueness of mind which requires the aid of a manuscript? But what if he is inexperienced, or weak of nerve, and becomes embarrassed, and "forgets his place"—what then? Why, let him stumble along, and say "Amen" as soon as he can. He will much sooner overcome such a liability, by so doing, than by trusting to his notes. A child learns to walk more readily by its own awkward movements than by mechanical supports.

We have mentioned that the chief design of notes is the prevention of embarrassment, and the vagueness which is usually its consequence, and have said that there are other and better preventives. The rule quoted from Goldsmith omits the most important one which applies to the pulpit, viz., the spiritual support which is pledged to the devoted minister. This thought

is usually dispatched with little remark, as presupposed, but we would emphasize it. It is a vast consideration; it is not enough pondered by God's ministers. We have been astonished at the slight moral courage of many who have read the promise a thousand times, and who ought to carry it in their hearts into the pulpit, like an impulse from "the third heaven:"—"*I will be with you even unto the end.*" Blessed is the assurance. Every word is strong. "I"—who? He who is God over all, and blessed for evermore; "will be," it is positive; with whom? "with you;" "even," it is emphatical; "unto the end," it is definite. And now with such a promise, and with a special commission from heaven for his work, and with all the motives of eternity stirring his spirit, ought it to be expected that the minister of Christ should quail and cower? He may well tremble under his responsibility, but he should be the last to fear the face of man. We have already admitted that he may in his early efforts be diffident, and that it is not a bad indication for him to be so, but we contend that he can, and ought to overcome this inconvenience, without a resort to notes. It is an evil which ought to be corrected—an enemy that ought

to be fought down; but let it be conquered, not by skulking under shelter, but sword in hand.

Again, one of the most important remedies of this difficulty is competent preparation. We have been a little curious to learn the various modes of preparation among preachers, and are astonished at their diversity. Some we have found who never put pen to paper for the pulpit. This certainly is not right. If it were possible to study a subject, and to retain it in the mind thoroughly, for the time being, without a record, still it must be committed to paper, or be unvailable for the future. They who eschew notes in the study are not usually overburdened with ideas in the pulpit. The indolence and negligence of such are inexcusable. We never knew any one profound or accurate who followed this course.

A second class go to the opposite extreme, writing their sermons *in extenso*, and preaching them *memoriter*. There are many objections to this course. It consumes too much time. Few faithful pastors can find leisure from more important duties for the composition and memorizing of two sermons per week. It will be almost invariably found that these sermon writers are poor pastors, not only neglecting their pastoral

duties, but rendered unsociable, reserved, if not morose, by their sedentary and laborious habits. Extemporaneous preachers ought to write much, not only to preserve their thoughts, but to counteract a tendency to versatility and verbosity—a tendency which will always beset them—but they had better write their sermons after than before delivery. They should be habitual writers, also, on subjects not peculiar to their profession. Some of the most eloquent speakers have been among the most vigorous writers: Cicero is an instance from the bar, and Hall from the pulpit; yet it was in spite of their oratorical habits and by the closest discipline. Again, sermons delivered *memoriter* lose their freshness and power. Few are the men who can vivify a stale and memorized discourse; and those who can, could, with suitable practice, be much more effective in extemporaneous delivery. There is no eloquence more commanding and sublime than that of the extemporaneous speaker, who, with a mastery of his subject, with the strenuous action of all his faculties, and the full play of his feelings, stands before his audience unshackled by preconceived details of thought and language.

There are others who write out their dis-

courses, but do not deliver them *verbatim;* retaining in mind the general train of thought, and using the language only so far as it can be readily recollected. This would seem an unfavorable method, for if the speaker is somewhat embarrassed he will endeavor to call up his language to his assistance, and not being able to do it, will become the more perplexed; and if he should not be embarrassed, he will be able to speak without such verbal preparation. In the one case, it is an evil; in the other, superfluous.

There are other wrong modes of preparation, which need not be enumerated; let us inquire for the right one.

By extemporaneous we need not say that we have not meant unpremeditated discourse, but unwritten. *The most thorough study is requisite for success to an extemporaneous speaker.* What is the best mode of preparation for him? This is the question. We pretend not to answer it fully, but will submit a few suggestions on the subject. A direct answer should include the *selection*, *arrangement*, and *elaboration* of subjects; a more comprehensive one would take in that prior mental discipline and training in elocution which we at present presuppose.

In regard to the *selection* and *arrangement* of

subjects, there are two modes—the textual and the topical. Both are common; but some clergymen use almost exclusively the former. In their ordinary reading of the Scriptures, they select a striking or apposite text, and form their divisions upon its different clauses. There is a kind of expository preaching, and there are some individual texts in respect to which this plan is good—sometimes admirable; but in most cases it is obviously not the best. A text includes frequently as many distinct topics as it does clauses, and all *unity* must be put at defiance by adjusting the divisions of the sermon to those of the passage. We would not stickle too much for a rigorous use of critical rules in addressing popular assemblies; still they are to be respected, for they are not adventitious; they are founded in the constitution of the human mind, and prescribe the best mode of addressing it—and the pulpit should always use the best.

It is not a little amusing to observe with what mechanical regularity some "textualists" lay down their "first," "secondly," and "thirdly," (most generally the *object*, the *means*, and the *motives*,) and finally "taper off" with a well-assorted series of "conclusions," sacrificing all unity of subject for uniformity of method. Unity

is one of the highest rhetorical excellences of a sermon. The discourse is better remembered than when composed of unrelated or slightly-related parts. One leading truth distinctively and exclusively presented, can be better appreciated by the judgment of the hearer than many of questionable relation. A single truth, especially if a weighty one, (and what truth of religion is not?) illustrated, placed in different lights, argued and enforced throughout a discourse, will make a profounder impression on the conscience of the hearer than a variety, discursively treated. There is sometimes much execution done by a scattering fire; still it is never so sure as that which is well-directed.

A further objection to this textual method is, that the stated preacher especially requires a more economical distribution of his resources, or he will soon find himself exhausted, and under the necessity of repeating in substance his old outlines.

The topical mode of selecting and arranging subjects is that in which the preacher first determines his theme or *topic*, and afterward selects a text suitable for it. For instance, he chooses the subject of "religious zeal," and he can take for his text, "It is good to be zealously affected

always in a good thing." Repentance, faith, holiness, perseverance, apostacy, &c., &c., are examples of topics for which appropriate texts may be found after the discourse is completely studied. Such a discourse may consist of divisions and subdivisions framed upon the different aspects of the topic, or of a simple series of arguments or illustrations on one of its aspects; the latter being always preferable, as admitting more closeness and more economy of thought. Having prepared his sermon in reference only to the topic, he can apply the text to it so far as it is applicable, without digressing into collateral clauses. Most of the sermons of Chalmers are specimens, while the skeletons of Simeon are examples of the textual method. As the advantages of this mode are the converse of the disadvantages of the other, they need not be discussed. Its simplicity, unity, energy, and economy are manifest.

We have blended the subjects of selection and arrangement for the sake of brevity. Another point remains, namely, the *elaboration* of the discourse, or that study which should follow the preparation of the "sketch"—the filling up of the outline. We have several brief observations to make respecting it.

First. The filling up, though general, should be so complete that the speaker can see through the *entire* perspective of the discourse. We do not mean that the *whole* discourse should be prepared; but that the *different propositions should be connected by leading and well-related thoughts.* An extemporaneous speaker should not go into the pulpit (except in emergencies) without such a clew. These connecting thoughts may be general enough to admit of abundant extemporaneous additions—three or four, in a dozen words, between each proposition, might suffice—but they should always be thoroughly studied and invariably *noted in their place on the manuscript.* We consider this an indispensable rule. Many sermonizers merely sketch their "divisions," and trust to the occasion for the intermediate train of thought: such are never safe. If embarrassment or temporary lassitude should overtake them, they may state their well-wrought positions only to bring into greater contrast a meager, spiritless filling up. Next to divine aid, this rule is perhaps the best guarantee against embarrassment. It gives the speaker a degree of confidence in his subject, which few embarrassing circumstances can disconcert. Whatever may be his lack of viva-

city or fertility when he enters the pulpit, he feels assured that he has provided a stock of solid and instructive thought, which cannot but be received with profit and respect by his hearers; there is little danger of confusion, therefore; not so will he discourse as one who beats the air. We know of successful extemporizers who consider this the prime human security in the pulpit.

Second. Not only would we have a somewhat consecutive train of thought *sketched down* between the propositions, but it is desirable that *some specially good thoughts, some apt or striking illustrations adapted to throw a strong light on the subject, and to arrest the attention of the audience*, should be noted—some illustrative quotation of Scripture or apposite passage of poetry—which will strike the mind as appropriate and even beautiful. Let not such a course be pronounced factitious or meretricious. We demand such preparation of the political or literary orator; and is the gospel of the grace of God less worthy? No speaker who wishes to make a forcible and vivid impression should neglect it. We do not recommend that such passages, when original, should be prepared in their verbal dress; in this respect they should

be extemporaneous—but let them be *noted*. The abbreviations given by Gregory of the concluding passages of Robert Hall's celebrated sermon on "Sentiments Suitable to the Times" are fine examples. William Pitt pronounced the last five pages of that discourse more eloquent than anything else on record. The language was extemporaneous, yet those overwhelming apostrophes were well studied.

Third. After thus thoroughly preparing the discourse, the next step is to *commit its outlines well to memory*. The more it is elaborated, the more readily can it be memorized; in most cases the two processes are coincident. Those who depend upon manuscripts in the pulpit cannot be aware of the facility of memorizing after such preparation.

Fourth. There is, besides memorizing, *a species of reviewing* practiced by most, perhaps all extemporaneous speakers, which may be called ruminating. "I never," said Bolton, "have preached a sermon to my people which I did not first preach to myself." This premeditating process is all-important in extemporaneous discourse; for by it the speaker not only refreshes his memory, but excites his thoughts, and kindles his feelings. Combined

with an ardent spirit of prayer and a close self-application of the subject, it becomes a most intense and hallowing exercise. There are two important rules respecting it, which are transgressed perhaps by most preachers.

One is, that it should be an exercise entirely of *meditation*, not of *delivery*. The speaker should review and expand his thoughts, but not try to clothe them in language. He will find himself always tending to this latter point, but should obstinately avoid it, because appropriate language will occur to him in the pulpit, if his thoughts are clear and vivid. If he gives them a premeditated dress, he will probably not be able to recall them fully, unless he can also recall the language. It is frequently embarrassing to depend upon premeditated but unwritten language; the difficulty here is like that of the *memoriter* preacher whose manuscript is not well committed, and whose ineffectual efforts to recall his language are more perplexing than would be the task of originating it extemporaneously.

The other rule is, that it should never be exercised much *immediately before preaching*,—only so far as to reassure the memory. The fatigue and agitation of mind occasioned by laborious

and anxious revision, just before entering the pulpit, must in most cases impair its buoyant play. Let there be, therefore, a full interval of repose between the time of revision and that of speaking. It is said of Rowland Hill, that he usually indulged in mental relaxation before entering the desk, and frequently when called from his study to attend the service, he was found exercising his mechanical taste by taking apart and recomposing the machinery of a clock or watch.

We might enlarge much on these points, but our limits require brevity. The few rules we have illustrated have been learned from a num ber of the best judges. Various minds require various methods; yet these few and simple principles are, we think, of universal and essential application. They are mostly practical axioms. We believe that no one who thoroughly adopts them will find it necessary or desirable to trammel himself in the pulpit with manuscripts.

After all, the great reform requisite in the pulpit is, we think, that which we have described in the preceding pages. Do away the factitious mannerisms of preaching, its technical and professional formalism, restore it to its primitive directness and simplicity, so that the peo

ple will resort to it not as to a literary prelection, and the preacher himself will not attempt, in it, an intellectual exhibition, but in singleness and intentness of mind will admonish, counsel, and instruct his hearers, weeping with those that weep, rejoicing with those that rejoice,—do this and you reform it at once in all other respects; its elaborateness, its stiff unnatural dignity, its "notes," and its notable feebleness, would vanish; it would become more instructive to the popular mind as well as more genial and more powerful.

ESSAY VI.

METHODIST PREACHING—ITS PRIMITIVE CHARACTERISTICS.

Its Success — Its Original Characteristics — It was Peculiar in its Themes — What were they? — Its Evangelical Liberalism — It was Peculiar in its Style — Its Verbal Style — Its Oratorical Style — Its Aim at Direct Results — Its Extemporaneous Delivery.

The old Methodist preaching! We do honestly confess a sort of pride for its noble naturalness, its moral power, and the grandeur of its results, and somewhat of a tinge of denominational bigotry in favor of the unadulterated preservation of its essential qualities. If that apparatus is best which best accomplishes its ends, who will say that Methodist preaching has not been the best preaching extant in our world for a hundred years? Denominations which had been in the American field a hundred years and more before Methodism had an adherent—denominations having the essential truth, and an educated ministry, and traditional prestige, and the influence of popular respectability, have been left a century in the rear of it; and some of the single annual additions of the latter have equaled the

whole numerical strength of the former. This is a point to be touched delicately, we know; but we would here hold in abeyance our aforesaid bigotry, if possible, and present the striking fact as full of significance, not to gratify our denominational vanity, but to teach us an admonitory lesson; for let us be assured, that the *preaching of the word is the great means of evangelization in the earth*, and that the peculiarities which have given preëminent success to our preaching should be held with an unyielding grasp.

Doubtless our denominational progress is attributable to a great many conditions, but our preaching has been the chief one; it has been related to, and has empowered all others. Suppose we had sustained our itinerancy, and even our wholesome doctrines, but with a stereotyped, lifeless, however refined, preaching—a ministry with even the culture of education, but heartlessly uttering manuscript essays from appointment to appointment—would our cause have broken out on the right and on the left, overwhelming the land, as it has through the labors of the men who, with little or no culture, have made it a glory in the world? And does any one doubt, that if all the Christian preaching of the earth

were conducted in the same style of directness, energy, and unction that these men used, the Gospel would overflow the world, as Methodism has so rapidly its own immediate fields in Great Britain and the United States? Notwithstanding all the drawbacks which the sectarian delicacy of such illustrations must present, even to many not over-fastidious Methodist readers, yet the actual force of them is felt immediately and conclusively. Turn all the pulpits of Christendom into such batteries as were the original pulpits of Methodism, and the evangelic combat would soon resound through the world. Hesitate as we may at the apparent boastfulness of the remark, all Methodists who have known that ministry, feel "the full assurance of faith" in its truthfulness.

From the very nature of the subject, it is impossible for us to speak of it justly, without this apparent sectarian egotism. We must be permitted, therefore, to make another laudatory assertion respecting this ministry, namely, that it not only excelled in the legitimate results of the office, but has been marked by an unusual amount of genuine talent, using this word in its popular acceptation.

Taken as a whole, the English Wesleyan

ministry is not only the most effective, but the most able body of clergymen in Great Britain; and if we were to express fully our own personal opinion, we should add, in the world. They are the best sermonizers, and the best pulpit speakers (being, besides the Roman priests, the only extemporizers) in the United Kingdom; and if once in an age the Kirk presents a pulpit prodigy like Chalmers, or the Baptists a Hall—cases which admit of no denominational comparisons—yet English Methodism, in the number, if not in the genius of its "first-rate" men, has stood pre-eminent. More masterly minds have not been connected with the religious affairs of modern England than the Watsons, Buntings, Newtons, Jacksons, Dixons, Hannahs, and others who have managed the interests of Wesleyan Methodism during the last fifty years.

In this country, our ministry has never been destitute of masterly intellects. Asbury will yet be placed, if not at the head, yet among the foremost ecclesiastical characters in American history. Our early bishops, M'Kendree, George, Roberts, Soule, Hedding, have been men of the highest pulpit power—such power as results not merely from the moral peculiarities of Methodist

preaching, but from commanding faculties and great personal characteristics. Meanwhile, there have ever and anon appeared in our pulpits rare lights, which have hardly found contemporary rivals elsewhere, such as Summerfield, Ross, Bascom, Ruter, Emory, Fisk, Olin, and not a few others, dead or alive. It is our sober opinion, that if we take the aggregate of "first-rate" pulpit men of all American Christian sects, Methodism would be found to have decidedly the largest proportion. We speak not now of learning, but of great pulpit ability and great personal traits.

It has not been for want of superior men that Methodism has not commanded more public respect; it has been chiefly because of its rigorous peculiarities, which have repelled the world, and adventitious circumstances connected with the social sphere, to which it has chiefly directed its labors.

The mass of the Methodist ministry has not been able to compare with that of other sects in education; but this is the only point (and we acknowledge it to have been a very material one) in which the comparison is disparaging to it. In natural talent, in sound Scriptural knowledge, in all the great traits of individual char-

acter, what body of men has ever surpassed it? "Their works do follow them;" and these are the best criterion of their capacity.

While, however, we unreservedly contend for thus much, we do not hesitate to admit that our claim may not have been equally high in respect to the lowest rank of the American ministries. With the exception of one or two other denominations, education has been a general prerequisite for the pulpit among American sects. This condition alone would be sufficient to preclude from them almost entirely a certain class of laborers, of which Methodism has availed itself with great advantage among the popular masses. While this class has perhaps been the occasion of a lower estimate of our ministry generally, it has really been no ground of comparison with other sects, as it constitutes a peculiar rank, almost entirely exceptional in their ministries. The question, as we have been reviewing it, is not whether taken aggregately, but taken proportionally, Methodism has had as competent a ministry, or, if you please, a more competent ministry, than other sects.

It would not be just for us to leave this admission respecting the very lowest rank of the ministry, without a qualification. We would

not disparage it by saying that (with one or two exceptions) it is peculiar to ourselves. This is a fact, but it is not a disparaging fact; on the contrary, were it demanded of us to say which class of our laborers has actually most extended Methodism in the land, and most peopled heaven with its converts, we should hesitate to award the honor to any other than this very class. Our world has need of such a class of evangelical workmen, and it will always have this need; and God grant that Methodism may always perceive the fact, and provide for it. We are the advocate of educational and ministerial improvement, but we should consider it most consummate impolicy—an act of ecclesiastical *felo de se*—for Methodism to adopt any exclusive standard of ministerial qualification. Let it have its standard, and a good one, and constrain all to it whom it can; but keep also that discretionary liberty of judgment, by which Wesley founded the modern lay ministry, and without which Methodism would probably have been unknown as a distinct body at this day.

Now, what is the purport of all these remarks, trenching so much as they of necessity have had to on the modesty with which collective, as well as individual, men should speak of them-

selves? Have they been written for self-gratulation, for invidious disparagement of sister Churches? Assuredly not; we have set out to present some views on the peculiarities of *Methodist Preaching*—peculiarities which we fear need to be somewhat renewed and vindicated among us; and we hope our readers will, with ourselves, deem these introductory observations on the character and usefulness of our denominational ministry, not irrelevant to the design. Let us now look at some of these characteristic peculiarities.

One of them, and doubtless the most important one, was the fact that the *saving elementary truths of the Gospel were continually reiterated by them*. Our primitive preachers were great readers of the Scriptures, and of their own theological standards. Their range of study was limited, but it was fertile. It afforded them resources for varied preaching, and they did preach variously; they had also provocatives enough to lead them into polemical discussions; but, whether preaching polemics or didactics, or pouring forth their favourite, general, and rousing exhortations, they had the happy art of mingling the essential doctrines of grace with all. Seldom did the man who was inquiring "What shall I do to be

saved?" hear a Methodist preacher, without bearing away with him the precise answer. The lost condition of the soul by nature, repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, justification, sanctification, the witness of the Spirit—such truths seemed to make up the alphabet out of which the very syllabification of their discourses was formed; so that it may be said, with but little qualification, that whosoever heard an ordinary Methodist sermon, however casually, thenceforward knew most, if not all, of the doctrines of grace.

This very excellence may not have been without a fault—the excess of a good thing; but if faulty, its error was on the safe side. Considering, however, the circumstances of those times—the necessity of direct saving preaching amid the universal declension of piety—it may well be doubted whether this general uniformity was in any wise a defect.

There was a generousness, a sort of evangelical liberalism, about the subject-matter of the old Methodist preaching, which could not but inspire both the preacher and his hearers. It repelled everywhere the dogmatic restrictions which the prevalent creed had put upon the promises of the gospel. God had concluded all

men in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all, was its affirmation, in the face of all teaching to the contrary. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds, it asserted. Universal redemption—the universal help of the Holy Spirit—free, present, perfect, and eternal salvation for all men who would accept it—this was its grand predication; and men bearing such a message could not but proclaim it as with the sound of trumpets.

There were, doubtless, many other elements of moral force in the preaching of our fathers, some of which we shall proceed to mention; but we cannot refrain from pausing here to put unwonted emphasis on the one specified. The saving truths of revelation are the great elements of moral power in the world. God's word is "God's almightiness" among men; and he that invests himself with its great essential energies is the mighty man in the moral world. Michael or Gabriel wielded no mightier sword in the wars of the angels. If nine-tenths of all the dogmatic theology extant were at once extinguished from the earth, and the doctrines immediately related to conversion and sanctification were brought forth in our pulpits and religious literature with proportionately more

fulness and frequency and application to ordinary life, who doubts that all the energies of Christianity would be redoubled? The early Methodist preachers, being mostly men who were powerfully converted from down-right sinfulness, went forth with their souls imbued and flaming with these powerful truths, and, with whatever inability otherwise, preached them in demonstration of the Spirit and power. The hardened multitude hailed them with shouts of derision; but, listening, wept, fell often like dead men to the earth, and went to their homes praying, and exclaiming "These are the men who show us the way of salvation!"

As we prize our ministerial vocation, let us study well this example of our fathers, and learn well its lesson. Woe to us when the generalities or moralities of religion, however glorious, shall take the place of those direct, soul-quickening doctrines which were the chief themes of our first ministry. We need them ever, as we have contended on a former page, to vitalize the generalities and moralities of religion.

So much for the main themes of Methodist preaching. We do not affirm that these were peculiar to it, but that this habitual reiteration of them was. Other ministries preached them;

but it is, we suppose, quite generally acknowledged, that when Methodism went forth through the land, the stated ministries of the country dealt mostly in the general didactics of religion. When Jesse Lee entered New-England, a half century had passed since the last extensive revival—that of Edwards's day.

But not in its themes only was Methodist preaching peculiar; it was notably so in its *style*. Our fathers, more than any other modern ministry, preached *ad populum*. They came out from the people, and knew how to address the people; and the popular effects of their preaching, the great massive ingatherings of the people into their communion, are a demonstration of their power nothing short of magnificent; proof of character and capacity above all polemic tomes or literary demonstrations which ever proceeded from clerical heads. In referring to their *style* of preaching, we speak comprehensively, meaning not only their *verbal* style, but their mode of illustrating the truth and their style of elocution; and in all these respects we have the presumption to say that, take them as a whole, they had more manly genuineness, more practical adaptedness, and therefore more effectiveness, than any other ministry since the

days of the apostles. The sectarian egotism of this remark *must* be excused, for the fact is, to our vision, an outstanding one, and may be seen and read of all men, in the results of their labours.

In regard to their verbal style, we are prepared to admit the charge that they were genally unlettered, and therefore unprepared to present their public instructions with those traits of literary purity and elevation which education alone can confer, and which we acknowledge to be extremely desirable in public religious teachers, both as befitting the exalted character of moral truth, and as an auxiliary means of the elevation of the popular taste. We would not, in the least, depreciate any genuine accomplishment which can be brought to the aid of religion. With the lack of literary polish, however, our early ministry had those advantages of the simple, direct, and often strenuous speech of the people, which educated men are too apt to lose, but ought not to lose, in their professional diction. The true purity of Saxon consists not merely in its simple words, but also in a sort of colloquial facility and aptness of phrases, of sentences; Addison's contrast with Johnson is not in words only, but in their

collocation. Now, what we would remark is, that the untutored style of our early ministry had this great excellence, this *colloquial directness and force*. And this is an inestimable excellence in popular address. It brought the truth not only to the hearing of the people, but to their comprehension; and not only to their comprehension, but to their interest. Men will readily fall asleep under the literary style of a manuscript sermon, but an earnest conversational style keeps the attention; it leads the mind of the hearer into a sort of interlocution with the speaker, and thus the truth insinuates itself into the conscience and the heart. This was the style of the Great Teacher himself.

Their mode of *illustrating* the truth was of similar character. Similitudes drawn, like Christ's, from familiar life—allusions to local or passing events—the thrilling anecdote—these were the staple of their expositions. We do not deny that in individual cases they were excessive, and became too characteristic, so as to change the preacher somewhat into the anecdote-monger; but such men were exceptional to the general character of the ministry. While the great mass of the Itinerancy avoided this abuse, they traversed the land, wielding, in their

homely, earnest speech and popular illustrations, a power over the common mind, compared with which the customary and more refined prelections of the pulpits of the day were only as the music of the piper compared with the wind abroad in its strength, the "mighty rushing wind."

One of their characteristics, seemingly at first view a fault, but really a great excellence, ought to be more particularly noticed; we mean the almost general habit of giving *experimental illustrations* from their own personal religious history. The egotism which would seem to accompany this course under more stately circumstances, could hardly suggest itself to them or their hearers in the simplicity of their primitive assemblies—held often in barns, kitchens, school-houses, or under the trees of the forest. Studying the truth in their Bibles, these laborious men found its appropriate comments written by the Holy Spirit, as in lines of fire, upon their own souls; and when these comments were read aloud, with tears and sobbing adoration, the effect was resistless. How often, when the rest of the discourse has apparently failed of impression, have we seen the multitudes melt with emotion when these experimental attestations

have been adduced! Such references to their own history could not fail to kindle their religious feelings, and to spread a sympathetic emotion through their assemblies.

As to the oratorical style of the early Methodist preachers, much might be said, though we doubt not the phrase is looked upon at this moment, by some of our readers, with quite equivocal thoughts. None, however, share such thoughts who lived in their day and heard them often; we doubt, indeed, whether any such one now reads these lines who is not ready to affirm, that, whatever literary improvement may have since been made by our ministry, in genuine oratory it cannot now pretend to rival its earlier periods. We speak of the average ministry—there are exceptional cases of preëminence now, and there were then; but we doubt much whether the mass of the ministry now equal in genuine pulpit eloquence their predecessors of thirty or forty years ago.

There was an unusual proportion of strong, stout-bodied men among them; their itinerant habits gave them robust frames, and trumpet-like voices; and their popular mode of addressing the masses gave them the right command of their vocal powers, the right modulation and

the right gesticulation. What preachers now extant among us surpass, in personal dignity and vocal power, Jesse Lee, Bostwick, Sargeant, Roberts, George, Ruter, Beauchamp, Roszel, Merwin, Brodhead? Not only the dignified mein, but the sonorous and eloquent tones of these men are remembered throughout the Church. The last of them, especially, was a noble specimen of manhood and oratory; he often preached on the final judgment, and usually with a dignity of bearing and a sublimity of voice which comported even with that lofty theme. Those who heard him could hardly have been more awe-smitten if they had seen the heavens fleeing away at the approach of the Judge; and often scores fell to the earth, and lay as dead men, while "the trumpet waxed louder and louder."

The naturalness, the colloquial facility of which we have spoken, were adapted to true oratory. Introducing their discourses thus, our old preachers usually rose with the subject to higher strains, until the sublimest declamation was often reached, and the awe-struck people wept or groaned aloud. There were doubtless faults about them,—excesses of good qualities, as we have admitted; but these defects were

but exceptional, and were always preferable to the opposite ones.

The traits already enumerated tended to produce another characteristic peculiarity, namely, *direct results*. Our fathers expected to see men awakened and converted under their sermons, and the expectation led to an adaptation of their discourses to this end. A sermon that had not some visible effect was never satisfactory, whatever might be the hope of its future results. It was usual with them to end the discourse with a home-directed and overwhelming application, and often to follow it immediately with exercises of prayer, that they might gather up the shaken fruit on the spot. Hence revivals flamed along their extended circuits. They were *workmen*, and workmen that needed not to be ashamed.

This aim at direct results is the secret of one half the success of Methodism—it is the explanation of most of our history. Men actuated and thrilled by such a purpose—how could they be otherwise than eloquent and demonstrative? It would make ordinary talents extraordinary, and convert weakness itself into strength.

Now take a corps of robust men, possessed of good strong sense, the vigorous vernacular of the

people, staunch sonorous voices, and sanctified hearts, and inspirit them with the purpose and expectation of *immediate results* from their labors, and you will have a specimen of the old Methodist ministry. How, we again ask, could such men be otherwise than eloquent and genuinely great? As a man thinketh, says Solomon, so is he; much more may it be said, as a man purposeth, so is he. Of the truly great men of the world we suppose it can be proved, that more have owed their success to energetic purpose than to great faculties. One thing, at least, seems certain, namely, that good ordinary faculties being given, and a determined purpose added, success is certain, except where some adventitious obstacle, beyond all human control, intervenes. The will is a presiding, a pervading faculty. The other powers are individually independent, to a great extent. A man may have a strong imagination, and be an intellectual coxcomb; or a strong memory, and be a blockhead; or a cautious judgment, and be a granite post, at once as insusceptible and as immovable; but an energetic will seems related to all the other faculties, and energizes them all. There are exceptions, to be sure: the ass may sometimes be determined, but the hero is always so.

Bring a man, in we care not what position, whether a mechanic at his bench or a captain at the head of hosts, to concentrate his endeavors on one absorbing purpose, and you add to all his resources for that purpose an energy, which, if history is not wholly a lie, is more important than all of them; and which, in some cases, when the destinies of states have impended, and all other resources have been confounded, has seemed, like God's own fiat, to evoke a universe of means out of nothing. He *must* be the great man who manfully and persistently keeps his soul up to a great purpose. If even uncontrollable circumstances interdict to him great achievements, still his soul will be great within him.

Our fathers, like the apostles, had the sublimest aim possible to man—the eternal redemption of human souls. They made this an *immediate* work, and directed every energy to it. A sermon with them was not an entertaining exposition, to be heard by a self-complacent audience through a leisure hour; nor an expert polemical dissection; nor a didactic example of clerical scholarship: others could so preach, for they had qualified themselves for it; but the untutored, earnest-hearted Methodist ministry

would have converted itself into a herd of ecclesiastical apes, by attempting to assume such a character. Preaching, on the contrary, was with them "sounding the alarm" through the land. They were as men standing on the heights of the shore, and crying out and pointing out (to wrecked mariners) the way to the land, amid the tumults of the storm. What, under such circumstances, could they do with rhetorical expletives, with circumlocutory descriptions, or finical gesticulations? They would point immediately and energetically to the place of safety; they must speak in the directest and most urgent terms; and every look, gesture, tone, would be instinct with the thought of the moment.

Now, though there is some qualification to be given to this description; though there were occasionally circumstances in which a different style of discourse was adopted and was suitable, —yet we contend that this was the usual character of the old Methodist preaching, and also that it is the legitimate style of the ambassador of God; that it is not only what the moral wants of the world demand, but that, more than any other mode of preaching, it naturally tends to true eloquence; not only the eloquence of

earnest thought and feeling, but to that simple, direct, urgent style which always accompanies the highest order of oratory, and to that natural but energetic manner which secures the right modulation, both of voice and gesture.

The subject suggests a practical remark which we cannot forbear uttering. This energetic *directness of aim* furnishes a rule of success almost infallible, and yet *practicable to all men*. No ambassador of Christ should be content to be an ordinary man. He professes to believe himself armed with a preternatural authority, and supplied with preternatural endowments. These, if nothing else, should give him an extraordinary character, based upon an extraordinary, pure, and sublime self-consciousness of his official position. Yet how often do we find in the sacred office men who pass through year after year of sheer ineffectiveness, uniform only in their lack of positive traits or positive results. This should *never* be the case. We care not what want of marked ability, or what inopportune circumstances there may be, a man of piety and of but ordinary faculties, should, in such an extraordinary function, be an extraordinary man; and he needs but one additional quality, and that, as we have said, a uni-

versally practicable one, to make him so—he needs but this resolute directness and consecration of purpose. Let the unsuccessful young man, that now, perchance, sits in his study reading these lines, and desponding, it may be, over the failure of his course—the declension of his congregation, the absence of conversions, the dispirited temper of his official supporters—let him, upon his knees, vow that he will now, by the help of God, begin his work anew, with an energetic aim at appreciable and immediate results; and what, if he persists in his resolution, will follow? Why, immediately this new purpose will change his own mood quite visibly: he will become inspirited, and soon all around him will catch the salutary contagion of his example. His subjects will now be chosen with more reference to their direct impression; his illustrations, his whole train of thought, his very words, will take somewhat of a new character, from the energetic purpose which sways him, a purpose which he recognised always, to be sure, but which has now become ignited and luminous in his soul. Thus resolutely reaching beyond all factitious or secondary appliances, and bearing down with all his might on the one design before him,

he will assuredly become a mightier man. If he is so naturally destitute of talent, as not, even under such an impulse, to be able to develop any new or higher ability than before, yet will his small talents, more earnestly used, become more interesting to his hearers. They will feel the power of his heart, if not of his head. An earnest character in a good cause can never fail to command the sympathy of the great popular heart. Put such a man anywhere, and he will carry with him the popular respect, if not the popular applause; nay, he will sooner or later compel along with him, to no small extent, the popular coöperation. Can we not recall facts in proof of these remarks? How often have we known preachers who, with very ordinary abilities, were, nevertheless, always received well, and who have sometimes been in general demand? And why? The only answer is, they were earnest, hard-working men, good visitors among the people, assiduous in the Sunday-school interest, energetic in social meetings, sympathetic with the sick and poor: men, in a word, who are intent on their one work —the rescue of souls.

Whatever then may be your talent, rouse yourself, O man of God, to a renewed and soul-

stirring consciousness of your high calling. If you have brilliant endowments, remember that their direct appropriation to the single ultimate purpose of your office will only exalt and improve them. If your gifts are small, remember that your graces and energy need not be so. Open your Bible and select subjects which will lead men directly to God. Go into the pulpit expecting, intensely praying, that souls may be rescued under the discourse of the hour; go into the prayer-meeting urging the people unto the cross; go forth into the streets, not to idle away time with colloquial common-places, or twaddling jokes, but, like Paul, to "warn" the people "from house to house with tears." Stand out on the arena of common life armed with the directest truths of the Gospel, and apply them uncompromisingly to every evil,—every question. Act thus, and heaven and earth shall pass away rather than the word of God fail in your hands.

But is there no considerable qualification to be admitted here? Is it the case that the Christian teacher does not need the more indirect and collateral modes of labor as well as this energetic course? The fallacy of the question consists in the tacit assumption that the earnest,

direct aim we contend for, cannot apply to such collateral modes; and what is most deplorable is, that this assumption is generally practical, as well as tacit. How common is it that doctrinal or ethical preachers assume a distinctive character as such, sacrificing to their elaborateness or their apathy the force that awakens souls and quickens the Church! We must indeed preach doctrines, and morals, and the generalities of religion, and we may do this, too, with all intellectual and literary appliances; but a direct and even intense aim at what we have called the "single ultimate purpose" of our office may modify and thrill with power all such topics and appliances. This is what we contend for; and we contend that the characteristic effectiveness of our early preaching consisted in this; and that the great reason of the comparative ineffectiveness of the pulpit, throughout the world, arises from the want of it.*

Another characteristic quite peculiar to the

* The late lamented President Olin was a notable example of such a union of effective directness with all the traits and topics of an educated preacher. He could preach on no subject without immediate and profound effect; and had his health permitted, he would have stood forth before the American public a national model of pulpit effectiveness. But more respecting him hereafter.

early Methodist preaching, in this country at least, and an almost necessary counterpart of the excellences we have described, was its *extemporaneous delivery*. We have already spoken with some emphasis, and yet with care, we think, on this subject. We need not repeat our views respecting it. The tendency to a contrary mode of preaching, which is incipiently developing itself among us, we deem not so much a fatal, practical heresy, as an unwise policy. Some very excellent and influential brethren encourage it by their example, at least; we would not give them provocation by unnecessary severity, but in merely alluding to the subject again, they will allow us to remind them of the historical, the grand fact, that the preaching we have just described, so mighty in its results over nearly all this continent, was never accompanied, perhaps, in a single instance, with the homiletic *manuscript*. Extemporaneous preaching was, until lately, the universal usage of our ministry. It was more than this,—it was, as we have intimated, a *necessary* characteristic of the kind of preaching we have attributed to them. We cannot, indeed, *conceive* of the preaching we have described as other than extemporaneous. Reading never could be preaching, in this sense,

any more than the letters of the one word spell the other. How those heroic men could have gone thundering through the land, prostrating multitudes to the earth, or melting them to tears, by the reading of manuscripts, is a problem which certainly no experiment ever solved, and no logic can show. They would have been an entirely different class of men, and Methodism a quite different affair, if they had been readers instead of what they preëminently were—preachers.

We contend then for the old Methodist school of preaching: not because it is old—traditional authority weighs little with us; but traditional success does weigh with us; and our whole denominational history is a demonstration of the utility of extempore preaching.

Such were some of the characteristic traits of the preaching which has made Methodism what it is in this land. We have not referred to the peculiar piety, the special anointing, which some of us claim for our early ministry; this, if not taken for granted, might be deemed invidious. With this exception, however, the traits enumerated were, in our estimation, their marked distinctions—the right *themes*, the right *style*, energetic *aim at direct results*, and popular or *extemporaneous* addresses.

ESSAY VII.

METHODIST PREACHING—HOW FAR ARE ITS PRIMITIVE CHARACTERISTICS AND METHODS SUITED TO OUR TIMES?

Heroic Character of the Early Methodist Ministry — Asbury and his Associates — The "Old Western Conference" — The Applicability of the original Ministerial Methods and Style of Methodism to our large Communities — The "City Missionary" and the old City Itinerancy — Importance of the old Methods to the Atlantic Communities — To the Interior States — To the Western Territories — The Prospective Population of the Country — Startling Statistics.

We have enumerated among the characteristics of the "Early Methodist Preaching" its *extempore address*, its *aim at direct results*, its *style*, and its *topics*,—the latter as being almost exclusively the vital, elementary truths of revelation. The results of this preaching, as witnessed throughout our continent, are proofs of its potency and appropriateness to the times. It was not only correlative to the times, but also and especially to the ecclesiastical system of Methodism—its ministerial methods, its incessant labors, its itinerancy, &c. It was a product jointly of the times and the system. While we have contended that its essential excellences should be retained, we have admitted that our own times require some modifications of it.

What are these modifications? What, in more general terms, should be the *characteristics* and *methods* of our preaching in these times? This question expresses, precisely enough, the subject of the ensuing two chapters, extending it beyond the homiletic traits enumerated, to the ecclesiastical peculiarities which justified them. The current demands for improvement take in both, especially in our large cities; and in examining these demands we must have reference to both.

To those who have read our preceding chapter on the subject, we need not say that our predilections for the "primitive school of Methodist preaching" are strong: we shall not dissemble, that in admitting the expediency of its modification, in some portions of the Church, and in showing what that modification should be, we shall be as much inclined to guard its old honor and excellences as to concede to the proposed improvements. We shall attempt rather to show the limits than the urgency of the latter. We confess a conviction of the importance of some of these improvements, and yet no little jealousy of them; and our ensuing remarks will show the influence of both sentiments—perhaps in a juster appreciation of the subject than we could otherwise entertain.

The recency of the nation, the wide dispersion of its population, the necessarily long journies of our early preachers, and the absence of thoroughly organized or permanent congregations, except in few places, led them to confine their discourses to comparatively few topics; these, as we have said, were the most essential, the vital truths of the Gospel, answering summarily the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" They entered a town or village, "sounded the alarm," held up the cross, and were gone. They were wise in this course—that which was most needed was said, though many things were left unsaid. They were driving, in all haste, the plowshare through the fallow ground, and scattering broadcast the good seed; the time for minuter work in the field—for dressing and gathering the crop—would come they knew, and God would meanwhile, they believed, raise up appropriate laborers for that necessity. They were the *Legio Fulminea*—the "Thundering Legion," whose duty it was to break and scatter the ranks of the enemy, and to pursue and shout onward in the rout, scaling ramparts, penetrating fastnesses, but leaving the spoils of the conquered field to the "reserve" which were yet in the

distance. The latter have come up; they have gathered the trophies, and now devolves upon us the task of defining the conquered territory, of fortifying it against future losses, of dividing, subdividing, and rightly governing its provinces.

There is not mere rhetoric, but historic truthfulness in this view of the heroic mission of our primitive ministry. At the risk of a slight but not irrelevant digression, let us glance here a little further at its character, for its character is no insignificant illustration of its preaching. In all sober-mindedness we do not believe its chivalry, and even romance, are rivaled in modern history, at least since the days of the Crusades. These stalwart evangelists were abroad, thundering through the land, when the storms of the Revolution were coming on, and while they were bursting over the country. Those who know intimately the early Methodist history, will doubt whether Washington and the *sans culottes* army of Valley Forge endured more hardships, or exhibited more heroic characteristics than Asbury and his invincible itinerant cohorts. Asbury himself exceeded Wesley in his annual travels. His tour almost yearly was from Maine to Georgia, by way of the West,

when a few log cabins only dotted Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee; when not one Methodist chapel, if indeed any other Protestant church, was to be seen beyond the Alleghanies; and when he had to be escorted from one settlement or fortified post to another by armed men. He averaged six thousand miles a year, mostly on horseback, on recent roads or through forests. During forty-five years of ministerial labor in this country his travels were equal to the circumference of the globe every four years! And yet this glorious old bishop, who ordained more men to the ministry than any prelatical bench of the nation,* and who, in his personal traits and achievements, as well as the later results of his labors, is unquestionably the first ecclesiastical personage in the American annals, has never yet been *named* in any of our national histories, and probably has not been known to our Ramsays, Bancrofts, Hildreths, or Goodriches.

And he was but a representative of the itinerant ministry of that day. Those great times produced such great men as Lee, who journeyed

* He presided in 224 Annual Conferences, and consecrated 4,000 ordinations. He began his labors with 600 members in the American Methodist Church, and fell at last at the head of 212,000, who have since multiplied to 1,400,000.

with two horses, one for a relay when the other should be fatigued; Pickering, with a district that swept from the extremity of Cape Cod, around to the center of Vermont; Hedding, traveling through the storms of winter, from Long Island Sound to the Canada line; Soule, braving the Borean terrors of the Maine forests; Bangs, Coate, Wooster, Sawyer, Dunham, Coleman, traversing the wildernesses of Canada; M'Coombs, Merwin, Roszel, Sharp, Boehm, Wells, Cooper, Garrettson, Mills, Smith, and hundreds of others, who incessantly went to and fro "crying aloud and sparing not," through the Middle States; Dunwody, Peirce, Dougherty, Kennedy, Capers, and many others, equally noble, the heroes of Southern Methodism. And then there were the staunch men of oak, the sons of thunder, in the West, M'Kendree, Roberts, Young, Blackman, Burke, Larkin, Quin, Finley, Cartwright, Collins, &c., the leaders of the memorable old "Western Conference," when it was the only one beyond the mountains—when it reached from *Detroit to Natchez*, and each of its districts comprised about two of the modern Western Conferences. Alas for the man whose heart does not palpitate at the contemplation of such men, and such indomitable ener-

gy! Theirs was a hardihood, a heroism which old Sparta would have applauded with the clash of her shields as cymbals. The success of Methodism has often been referred to as a marvel—a knowledge of the men who composed its first ministry explains the mystery.

Our history—not merely our Church history, but our national history—has an obligation yet to discharge toward these men. They laid the moral foundations of most of the American States. They marched in the van of emigration bearing aloft the cross, and they were almost its only standard-bearers throughout the first and most trying period of our ultramontane history. When the tide of population began to sweep down the Western declivities of the Alleghanies, and during the forming period of the states of the Mississippi Valley, they were in motion everywhere, evangelizing the rude masses, and averting barbarism from the land. Let us not be accused of extravagant eulogy in this passing reference to their merits—so long ignored by our historical writers.

Such were the men, such the circumstances of our first ministry. And under such circumstances it was wise, we repeat, to limit, as they did, the range of their pulpit instruction to

those topics which were most adapted to the immediate salvation of their hearers. Beyond these topics they did occasionally venture, as we have admitted, but in very restricted excursions; in sallies against some of the polemical dogmas of the day, Calvinism especially, or in defense of some of the important practical ordinances of the Gospel; their preaching, however, consisted of few though powerful sermons, and aggregately, of the truths which relate to personal conversion.

These truths we must continue to reiterate, but not so *exclusively* as did our fathers. Inevitable circumstances—nay, very salutary circumstances—have intervened, and require of us a greater amplitude and detail of religious instruction, in the older sections of the country at least. Our cause has consolidated. There is scarcely a town or village in the denser sections of the nation where the Methodist chapel does not appear. Nearly all our church edifices in the Atlantic States have been erected or renovated within twenty-five years;* they contain now stated congregations and thoroughly organized societies, who, habitually assembling within

* This has been a work of vast enterprise and expenditure; could its statistics be presented, we doubt not they

their walls, cannot be edified, much less satisfied, with repetitious exhortations on obvious or familiar topics. The preciousness of such topics will redeem them, to a great extent, from the defects of the preacher; but there may be an intolerable excess of a good thing. Men cannot subsist on honey or milk, but need other, though it be inferior, nourishment. A man can live better habitually on the varied constituents of the potato than on pure wheat. The axe may be necessary to fell the forest or cleave the rough mass, but more delicate and varied implements are needed to work it into useful wares. Still the glory of the primitive school of Methodist preaching has not yet departed; its day, its necessity still exist, and must continue to exist on our own continent *for generations*.

First. It is needed still to no inconsiderable extent in our Atlantic communities. Our old and mature Churches may require the proposed improvements, but all around them are moral wastes, which, instead of being recovered, are absolutely growing more desolate year by year.

would exhibit the liberality of the denomination in a striking light, and relieve greatly the unfavorable comparison sometimes made between its other philanthropic contributions and those of sister sects.

Let us not think, then, that we require in our large cities only educated and polished preachers and restricted modes of labor; these we must have, but we yet need there, as much if not more than in the first days of Methodism, voices "crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord"—men who will "circuit" these cities as did our fathers, and, like them, preach continually and powerfully the primary truths of religion among the neglected populace.

We would emphasize the assertion, for there is, we fear, a tendency to a very opposite opinion. The City Mission is a happy idea of the times, especially as an adjunct of a local pastorate; but we do not consider it, as usually conducted, an appropriate appendage to our own system, or anything like an adequate substitute for our old *city itinerancy*. Our first preachers did, in cities, precisely the work which city missionaries now do, and with how much greater success! All our urban Methodism sprang from their labors. They erected their first batteries in the neglected and impoverished localities. They gathered converts into their small bands, without the invidious association of a "mission to the poor." They offered themselves to the poor; the poor virtually, though

informally, accepted them as their *chosen* pastors, and spontaneously formed a tacit contract, a self-respectful habit of supporting them. These first "city missions" are now become wealthy and intelligent "city stations," and require indeed a modified ministerial treatment; but if the field for such labors remains—nay, is tenfold more ample and urgent—why is not the old ministerial apparatus, with all its powerful attributes, as appropriate as ever? Where is the reason for a change? not assuredly in the moral condition of our suburban masses; not in the necessity of a different ministerial regimen, for certainly none could be more appropriate than the pastoral methods of our fathers. *All the original conditions of Methodist ministerial labor exist, we assert, in our present large communities, only vastly augmented.* What then, we again ask, has occasioned the change in our ministerial treatment of the poor? What else than the illusion which has come over us with our growing prosperity, that because our Churches, originally founded among the poor, have outgrown their first humble spheres, therefore Methodism has necessarily changed its relative position to the destitute populace; that it must now look chiefly after the comfort and in-

telligent treatment of its well-housed children, and send out only an occasional messenger to pick up the foundlings of the highway and convey them into a neighboring shelter ycleped "a city mission chapel." This is not right; this is recreance to the old chivalric honor of our ministry—it is recreance to the honor of our Master in heaven.

The figure, like most figures, may be somewhat an hyperbole, for thanks be to God, we still to a great extent preach the Gospel to the poor; but is not this change coming over us? Is it not one of the most serious liabilities of our cause? While our intelligent city Churches are demanding a different class of preachers and an improved style of preaching, and also important changes in our ministerial methods, let them be reminded that the vast destitute masses around them require still the old methods, the old class of preachers and preaching—that none, since the apostolic missionaries, could more precisely meet their deplorable necessities.

The *Legio Fulminea*, whose task we said it was to break the ranks and take the ramparts of the enemy, are, then, still needed even here in our cities, where our own fortifications display their completed proportions and victorious

flags; for even here many a hostile fortress stands in juxtaposition with our defenses; the very citadel is yet in possession of the foe, in most of our large cities, and the circumvallations—the suburbs—are crowded with his forces. We assert, and would assert it over and over again, that all these demoralized regions should be invaded by "Itinerant Methodist Preachers," as the cities were at first. Methodist families would be found scattered among them, as then; these would take in the evangelist and open their doors for preaching, as then; converts would multiply, as then; lay assistants would rise up, classes and societies would be formed, and these would grow into self-supporting Churches, as then. Why not? Is there any imaginable reason why not now as well as then? And is there not for such labors now a great vantage ground, which our fathers had not, in the aid which our existing Churches can afford them?

The above has been the historical process of Methodism from the beginning—it is the process of its present success in its foreign mission fields, and is precisely what is needed in this its domestic missionary work. An English friend, who is familiar with the Wesleyan Missions,

gives, in a communication to the writer, the following summary view of their *modus operandi*:—

"As soon as any number of his hearers 'receive the truth in the love of it,' our missionary unites them into a 'class' under the care of a 'leader.' And thus the hedge of discipline is placed round this cultured spot, and assistance and sympathy given to these 'babes in Christ.' The pastoral care is divided with these leaders, who watch over the little flocks in the absence of the missionary. Then, as soon as divine grace has drawn forth and sanctified the abilities of his converts, the missionary finds out who among them have an aptitude for exhortation; he licenses them to 'exhort;' afterward, if they improve, to 'preach;' then a 'circuit plan' is formed, a place provided where a congregation can meet on the Sabbath, and there this 'native preacher' in his turn, 'of the ability which God giveth,' speaks to the people 'all the words of this life.' Such preachers multiply and improve, while the missionary directs their studies, and oversees the whole machinery—preachers, leaders, classes, schools, prayer meetings, &c., until often such circuits rise, like those in the Friendly Isles, Africa, &c., to have

twenty or thirty chapels, and fifty to one hundred 'local ministers.' Some of these chapels, too, are able to accommodate from one thousand five hundred to two thousand persons; most of them are well filled, and some of them are crowded. Of the eight thousand two hundred and twenty-six 'assistants,' there are only eight hundred and forty-three who are *salaried*, and these give their whole time to the work, as catechists, school teachers, &c. The rest being chiefly local preachers, interpreters, &c., give their services gratuitously."*

Now this, we affirm, has been the universal process of Methodism until within a few years; and what we complain of is, that the Churches founded by precisely such means are, now that they have become isolated and self-supporting, generally repudiating this effective plan as obsolete, though all their adjacent fields—nay, the very interjacent fields—often, indeed, their immediate precincts—demand just such energetic labors, and demand them, in most of our large cities, *more urgently than ever before.* "Exhorters" are hardly known among us any more; the "Local Ministry" is falling

* Rev. William Butler, now of New-England Conference.

into comparative disuse; "Itinerancy" in our cities is being abandoned: meanwhile, the populace are perishing in their moral destitution, and we obtrude upon them an occasional "city missionary" as an apology for the sacrifice of our once powerful and still needed methods.

We contend, then, that whatever improvements we may propose in our standard of ministerial qualification and modes of ministerial labor, we should still have, even here in our ripest fields, a large proportion of just such labors in and out of the pulpit as pertained to the first school of Methodist preachers—its same summary themes, the same direct style, *ad populum*, the same aim at immediate results, the same effective methods.

Second. We shall still need them also, to a great extent, in that large field, the "*Provincias Internas*" of our territory, lying between the Atlantic margin and the later settlements of the West, where the "circuit system" is not yet generally broken into stations. Throughout this vast region Methodism is flourishing, and will, in less than twenty-five years, be consolidated into great strength. Its ministry is now improving, but might still faster improve, as the increasing

supply of candidates allows a more discriminating choice. Taking it as a whole, it is the noblest sphere for the advancement of both our Ministry and Churches now occupied by us; but our primitive ministerial characteristics and methods are still appropriate to it, and could not advantageously be modified, except by such improvements as should not essentially change them.

Third. The vast unsettled portions of the continent from the Mississippi to the Pacific, and from the Great Slave Lake to the Gulf of California, will afford them a magnificent theater during as long a period, at least, as the Church has yet recorded in its annals.

We must be permitted to delay on this part of our subject, though in no wise proportionately to its importance.

There are several considerations respecting the settlement of this grand area which should be borne in mind. The population which is to flood it, and is now pouring into it, will be *more largely foreign* than were the earlier migrations of the country. A very considerable proportion of the first settlers in the new territories were from the older states, and they carried with them better notions of religion and morals

than come to us now from Europe. He must be of dull vision who does not see the moral liabilities to the nation which must arise from this transposition of demoralized European masses into the almost boundless region mentioned. More than half of the continent is now, and quite suddenly, opening into a stupendous moral battle-field, and men, as mighty as those we have described, are needed for the conflict.

Again: this population will, for some years, probably be as much, if not more *dispersed* than were the earlier emigrations, and will therefore require our primitive ministerial modes of *energetic labor, and especially of travel*, to supply it. It no longer maintains a frontier margin, continually thickening though extending, but throws itself into detached positions, anywhere and everywhere, so it but finds local attractions. The north-west territories, the Great Salt Lake, Texas, New-Mexico, Oregon, California—these are its diverse resorts. The whole western extent of the continent is in fine thrown open, the last barrier has fallen,* and the European masses are

* The greatest impediment, the prepossession of the ground by the Indians, may be said to be about removed. There are now about 418,000 in all our limits; most of

entering it with a rush. Our "Itinerants" must, in old style, with horse and saddle-bags, rush on with them, mingling in the mighty melée, and bearing up, in its very front, the ensign of the cross.

Were these stupendous migrations to be more consolidated, some formidable moral consequences would result, but they would be more accessible to our moral agencies. Coincident, however, with the accessions to our population have been the extensions of our territorial area, and the coming multitudes are still to be scattered, as have been the preceding hordes. In 1790 the number of persons to the square mile in the United States was nine; twenty years later it was precisely the same, though the aggregate population had increased from five millions to more than seven. In 1840, we had fourteen to the square mile, but the ratio had diminished to twelve—a gain of only *three* since 1790. By 1850 the ratio had fallen still lower—to seven and twenty-two hundredths—giving one and three-quarters less to the square mile than in 1790! And can we predict that this coincident

these are the enervated aborigines of our Pacific and Mexican domains; the estimated number inhabiting our "unexplored territories" is but 30,000.

extension of territory and people will not continue, thus giving a general dispersion to our population, and an almost indefinite missionary field for the Christian energies of the country?

They mistake egregiously who think the primitive ministerial system of Methodism is done with in this country: *there is at this hour opening a larger field for it than ever.* While we contend for modifications in the consolidated portion of the Church, in order to adapt them to the greatest effectiveness there, we affirm, and we mean literally what we affirm, that they have not yet done one-half their allotted work in the land.

Further: while this new population will be more entirely *foreign*, and from the amplitude of the area and freer access to it, more *dispersed*, it will also be vastly more *multitudinous* than our immigrations have heretofore been. All possible obstructions, whether of a political or any other character, must necessarily be but temporary. It is sublime, we were about to say, appalling—this amazing growth of a nation—this exodus of the European peoples into our mighty wildernesses. We could once estimate somewhat its ratios, but now it almost defies our calculations. A few years ago it was ascer-

tained that our western frontier line moved onward at the rate of about thirteen miles a year; and this march of a nation—extending from the Northern Lakes to the Mexican Gulf—bearing with it all the ensigns of civilization and liberty—felling the forest, dispelling at every step actual aboriginal barbarism, planting fields, building cities, erecting temples and schools, constructing canals and roads of iron—was considered one of the sublimest spectacles in the history of man; but now the line of march is broken, as we have said, into detached columns which have taken the extreme points of the field, and the evercoming accessions observe no rules of progression. What practicable Christian agencies can meet the wants of these foreign hosts? Can we think for a moment of abandoning in this vast region any of the effective apparatus of Methodism, under such circumstances? It has been estimated that during the current decade there will be introduced into the West a foreign population equal to the whole present population of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. The thoughtful man, who reminds himself of the ignorance and moral corruption of these European hordes, can hardly suppose that the better moral characteristics of the nation, already sadly degen-

erating, can survive the contagion of such overwhelming vice, or the better institutions of the republic withstand such a flood of semi-barbarism. One thing we must be sure of, viz.:—that every moral resource at our command will be needed to maintain, in its present relative status, the moral and intellectual position of the country.

It is to the West, we say, that this overwhelming flood sweeps, and thither moves with it the power of the nation—the political forces which will take their moral character from these multitudes, and impart it to us all. The center of representative population is continually tending westward. In 1790 it was twenty-two miles east of Washington; it has never been east of the national metropolis since, and never can be again. At the census of 1800 it had been transferred to thirty miles west of Washington; in 1820 it was seventy-one miles west of that city; in 1830 one hundred and eight miles. Its westward movement from 1830 to 1840 was no less than fifty-two miles—more than five miles a year. It is now probably in Ohio. During about fifty years it has kept nearly the same parallel of latitude, having deviated only about ten miles south, while it has advanced about two hundred miles west. Thus move the

political destinies of the country into what we have described as the arena of its moral and religious conflicts.

With this territorial enlargement and increased accessions of European population, the national population, indigenous and foreign, is destined to swell into aggregate magnitudes truly amazing—magnitudes which it would seem must hopelessly transcend any moral provision we can make for them. If the ratios of our increase hitherto can be relied on, the population of the United States will be in 1900, more than *one hundred millions*,—exceeding the whole present population of England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. A step further in the calculation presents a prospect still more surprising: by 1930—only seventy-five years hence—this mighty mass of commingled races will have swollen to the stupendous aggregate of *two hundred and forty-six millions*, equaling the present population of all Europe. According to the statistics of life, there are hundreds of thousands of our present population—one twenty-ninth at least—who will witness this result.

It is hardly possible to restrain the pen from uttering the spontaneous and overwhelming re-

flections which these statistics suggest; but we leave them in their own naked yet startling significance.

Such, then, according to the mathematics of the argument, is the domestic field of evangelic labor opening before us. These calculations have no episodical irrelevancy here. We have chosen to present them, as far more relevant than general remarks. They sustain with startling force our position, that the energetic "itinerant" methods of our early ministry—its methods in the pulpit and out of it—are still needed; that there is a larger field for them now in our own country than there ever has been. We shall need, for generations, Circuits and Districts, and stout-hearted and staunch-bodied men to travel them; and let those who think they see the expediency of amending our system, in respect to "Itinerancy," "the Presiding Eldership," &c., to suit it to our denser communities, (an expediency we are not disposed to deny,) be reminded that they should so direct their efforts as to meet a comparatively local want without inflicting a general disaster.* We have so often

* We believe our ecclesiastical system is capable of such local accommodations without injury to its general harmony. The chief difficulty in the way of desirable improvements

drawn this admonitory inference in the course of these remarks, that doubtless the reader thinks it sufficiently reiterated, but it presents itself to our attention at the conclusion of the foregoing statistics, with peculiar impressiveness. We deem it the capital lesson of our cause at this moment. Ideas of innovation are becoming rife among us; many of them are wise, the true signs of healthy progress, and few men have affirmed them more decidedly than the writer of these pages; but with them seems generally entertained a vague, and, as we have shown, most fallacious impression, that the primitive ministerial style and system of Methodism is fast becoming incompatible with the wants of the times—that its day is about past. It is all-important that this impression should be rightly qualified, that especially our intelligent and influential members in the older states, who can appreciate Methodism in its general capacities, as well as in its local success, should be impressed with the conviction that it has been thus far but *approximating* its providential mission, and that the grandeur of its general designs may still merit almost any local incon-

among us is our *fear* of them. Our fathers adapted the system to their times: we lack their courage.

veniences. The statistical arguments we have presented cannot fail, if examined, to arrest the attention of the Church, and to convince it that it may still move on in its old triumphant march to new and grander fields of conflict, and that all its faithful adherents should still be willing to make magnanimous sacrifices for its success.

It can well, however, be admitted, that some of the desired modifications, both of its ecclesiastical system and its homiletic character, may be made; and having now accomplished what we proposed, as a chief design of this chapter, viz., "to show rather the *limits* than the urgency of such changes," we proceed to admit and state some of the homiletic improvements demanded.

ESSAY VIII.

METHODIST PREACHING—WHAT MODIFICATIONS OF IT ARE REQUIRED BY THE TIMES?

A larger Range of Practical Instruction needed — Reasons for it — More Doctrinal Instruction required — The Philanthropic Enterprises of the Church not sufficiently represented in the Pulpit — Special Addresses — Public Questions — Such Improvements of our Preaching requires the Improvement of our Preachers — Means for the Latter — Better Choice of Candidates — Our Supply — Enormous Sacrifice of Young Men — A Reserve List needed — Preparatory "Course of Study" — An "Educational Society" — Theological Schools.

We have admitted that the times require, especially in the older sections of the Church, more *varied preaching* than was common in our early ministry.

First. It should be varied by a larger range of *practical instruction.* If we except some of the main points of practical divinity, the Methodist pulpit will, we think, be found more deficient in this respect, than any other evangelical ministry in the land. This is a quite explicit remark, we know, and may be an attractive target for animadversions, but we nevertheless affirm it. Let it be observed, however, that it refers not so much to the *import-*

ance as to the *variety* of our practical preaching. Precisely here lies the great defect of our present ministrations, and it needs plain dealing and speedy correction. Wince not, clerical brother, at a few outright references to it, even though you should not concur in them. Frankness will not hurt us; and in a work like this, if anywhere, honest individual opinions, though even erroneous, may be respectfully allowed. You will not, after what has been said, question our high estimation of the Methodist ministry—the men of genius or special talent scattered through its ranks, excel, we believe, in number and power those of any other American pulpit; the fathers we have described as a heroic host; their successors, who have been educated by similar circumstances, in the severer fields of our work, are still, as a body, rare and powerful men; but is there not a large class—their successors in the maturer fields—a class which is fast becoming our aggregate ministry there—who, without special talents, are also without the heroic characteristics of the fathers? And is it not the case that there is in this growing class men of mere indolent mediocrity, men of little study, little variety, and little thoroughness of instruction; and who not unfrequently

attempt to substitute physical for intellectual energy in the pulpit? These assuredly are not the men needed by our matured Churches of to-day, especially amid the sectarian rivalries of the cities and larger villages. Their limited topics may be as good as those of the fathers, but their local circumstances are different. What variety they possess soon becomes exhausted; and is it not often apparent that their subjects, however intrinsically good, are but hackneyed props upon which to hang "First," "Secondly," and "Thirdly,"—the hasty excogitations of Saturday night or Sabbath morning?

Practical training, we repeat—practical training in the details of Christian duty, is the present want of Methodism, and for two reasons.

The first is, the promiscuous character of our people. It is not a denominational detraction, but a denominational honor that our Churches have hitherto been chiefly composed of the poorer classes—those who most need the gospel, and who, when properly trained by it, become its best examples; but this honorable fact has devolved upon us a peculiar responsibility,—the promiscuous masses we have gathered together need specially careful instruction. Under the ministrations of the fathers they were initiated

into the great truths and the personal experience of religion. The elementary truths of Christianity, accompanied by a sound religious experience, are doubtless a better guarantee of Christian morals than thorough training in the latter without the former; but the one cannot supersede the other. Nor is it necessary for our argument to admit that serious derelictions are more common among us than among other sects; it is sufficient to affirm the importance of the practical divinity of the Scriptures on the one hand, and on the other, that among us too exclusive a devotion to the consolatory or admonitory aspects of the Gospel—too hortatory a style—have too much limited our practical instructions.

Another reason for improvement in this respect is, that the great variety of the practical themes of the Gospel would afford more variety to our preaching, and therefore more attraction to our congregations. The restricted pulpit range of our first preachers, however suitable to their modes of labor, has too much uniformity for ours. An attempt to relieve the tameness of this uniformity of thought by energy of feeling or declamation, may partly succeed; especially in connection with good pastoral habits:

it may sometimes render it tolerable to a popular audience through a two years' appointment; but it will not make up for the defective training of the people, and must in the "long run" fail to interest, if it does not alienate, our most intelligent families.

How rich is the variety of practical themes for the pulpit! The practical bearings of repentance, the practical applications of faith; prayer—private, family, social, public; public worship; the observance of the Sabbath; baptism; the Lord's supper; modes of personal effort for the salvation of men; charity to the poor; charity to religious opinions; serial lectures on the historical characters of the Scriptures; the relations of pastors and people; and the large range of practical counsels appropriate to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, &c.; assuredly he who with such themes, and their sublime relations to time and eternity, fails of varied interest in the pulpit, must be inexcusable. It is on these very themes that the multitudinous assemblies under our care most need instruction.

Second. For the same reasons our preaching should be *varied* with more *doctrinal instruction.* Do we mistake in saying that the charge

of vagueness applied to our practical instruction is applicable to our doctrinal preaching—not to the importance of its subjects, but their variety? Is there not even among us a tacit dislike to doctrinal themes in the pulpit, owing in part, it may be, to the virulence with which distinctive doctrines are liable to be discussed, or the too habitual devotion of some preachers to them, notwithstanding our denominational tendency to the contrary?

Whatever truth God has revealed should be proclaimed by his embassadors; but are there not many such truths which have never been discussed by some who read these lines, and who have grown gray in the pulpit?

It is to be feared that some of those doctrines which we deem most vital to Christianity are most neglected, so far as their elucidation or defense is concerned. The Athanasian views of the Godhead we identify with the very essence of orthodoxy; but how seldom are these doctrines discussed in our pulpits! Our dialectics have not much to do with them indeed, but our Bible has, and the Scriptural illustration and demonstration of truths so fundamental cannot certainly be unimportant.

Here again we have an ample field for *va-*

riety of pulpit themes, God and his attributes; Christ, his Godhead, his offices; the Holy Spirit, his Divinity and work; the atonement; repentance; faith; justification; regeneration; sanctification; the resurrection; future judgment; rewards and punishments; the spirituality and immortality of the soul; the nature and reality and evidences of experimental religion, &c.

The objection, a tacit if not an uttered one, that doctrinal preaching would tend to a speculative if not worse spirit in the Church, ought not to be admitted for a moment—it is a slander on the truth of God. There may indeed be dialectic gymnastics attempted in this sublime arena —polemic farces, at which devils as well as men may recreate themselves; but the same may be said of experimental and practical divinity. No perversions of doctrine have been more monstrous than the recorded delusions of practical and inward religion.

On the contrary, the great doctrines of revelation, rightly presented, would form the most substantial basis for our practical instructions; for those assaults on public evils which we have recommended; and also premises for the most powerful motives of personal religion. The good sense of the preacher, of course, must be their

guarantee against abuse; but it is to be supposed that he who is counted worthy of this ministry should not be lacking in common sense, or the reverent appreciation of such impressive themes.

Third. There is another class of subjects not usually comprehended in our practical divinity, but having a secondary relation to it, at least, which, occasionally and judiciously treated, would increase much the variety of our pulpit themes, and afford instruction and interest to our congregations. Among these we would include first the great modern schemes of evangelization, such as Sunday schools, Missions, Tracts, and Bible societies. The pastor, especially the "stationed" pastor, should make himself familiar, not merely with the general character of these enterprises, but with their leading data, if not their detail, at least so far as they are connected with his own denomination; not vague declamation will suffice for them—he can show their substantial value only by substantial facts. It is thus only that he can train his people to a practical interest in them. The Churches which are most familiar with these institutions are those which most liberally sustain them; and it cannot be doubted that their fuller re-

presentation in our pulpits would soon effect an appreciable change in their success among us. Do we mistake in saying that these great interests of modern Christianity are lamentably neglected by our general ministry, so far as their appropriate representation in the pulpit is concerned? Our periodicals and special agents cannot supersede this service.

Again: we would include in the present class of pulpit themes those special addresses to the young, the aged, to citizens on the ethics of their political relations, &c., which occasionally form interesting and instructive series of discourses in the modern pulpit. Important principles of Christianity are applicable to these subjects, and, rightly discussed, they may become the special occasions of most special appeals of the truth.

To these we would add, occasionally at least, other topics—those which arise from adventitious questions of the day, or public interests indirectly related to religion or morals. Pauperism, intemperance, gambling, education, patriotism, great national occasions or anniversaries, the moral aspects of political events, the uses and abuses of wealth, the moralities of business life, war, with the practical peace questions,

and even "colonization" and "slavery," if you please. We can only refer to these varied classes of subjects. They present an almost endless scope, and the preacher who avails himself of them prudently, can hardly fail to render his pulpit attractive to the people. We say *prudently*, for doubtless there is a liability to imprudence here. Such secondary topics should have but a secondary place in his instructions. They should be used merely as an occasional digression from the more essential themes of the gospel. They have nevertheless their claims and their appropriate seasons.

It is a misfortune for our argument that the non-evangelical pulpit of the day has dealt so largely in these collateral topics, finding in them a relief from the less congenial themes of true religion; let not this abuse, however, militate against the due use of such important subjects. They need not interfere with, but may be sanctified, as we have shown, by our very highest evangelism, and it may be affirmed that we can hardly train our people to the highest standard of Christian intelligence and enterprise without their discussion in the pulpit. Let us put away the thought that such a discussion of them would interfere with the fervency

of our piety or our usual revivals. The objection would give to the revilers of fervent piety and revivals a formidable argument. Our sister evangelical Churches which are most addicted to these discussions, not only take the lead in philanthropic enterprises, but abound in genuine revivals. Our own more energetic spirit should not lag behind them in either respect.

We have thus indicated some of the modifications which the times demand in our preaching, especially among the older communities, where our congregations are not only stated, but abound in intelligence and resources that require such improved treatment. What an effect on our ministrations, in such communities, would a general endeavor after this improved and varied preaching soon produce! More thorough habits of study would be formed; an improved style both of thought and address would follow, and the whole intellectual tone of our pulpit would be elevated. It would, in fine, be a partial but most salutary process of self-education to our ministry, and, combined with their old distinctions, such as we have described, would soon enable them to rival their competitors in the larger cities, in these, as in other respects, and thus stop effectually that relative

declension of our cause which, according to reports of some among us, has been taking place in most of them within a few years. We insist, as we did in our former chapter, that those old distinctions, or whatever of them may now be desirable, can be combined with these improvements. Not an iota of our moral power need be sacrificed.

It is hoped that, while we urge these improvements as appropriate to our general ministry, it is not necessary to guard our remarks against a prejudiced construction. It is admitted that there are scattered all through our ranks individual men who have surveyed thoroughly, in both the study and the pulpit, these large fields of thought, and who even stand before the public on their most advanced grounds. Honor be upon such men! for most of them owe their success to their own unaided endeavors, sustained amid the most trying ministerial responsibilities which have been known since the days of the apostles. Our ministry has also not been without a class of men preëminent even above these, for reputation at least—men of renown in the Church, representative men, who have been masters of not only the great themes of the pulpit, but of the highest ability for their

discussion. The names of Summerfield, Bascom, Cookman, Fisk, and Olin, have had few cotemporary rivals in sister Churches; and other names, not yet rendered sacred by death, will hereafter be added to the list. All this we admit, and yet deem the preceding observations applicable to our general ministry.

Thus much, then, for the *improvement of our preaching;* but this implies also a correspondent *improvement of the preacher.* We have alluded to the effect which such an elevated standard of pulpit instruction would have on his own intellectual character. With our candidates, however, we should anticipate this improvement, and our pre-requisites should be such as to secure it. The remark is not only applicable to the older sections of the Church, but in part to the most recent; for it has pleased God so to multiply our candidates throughout the connection, as to allow a very considerable discrimination in their selection, were we but disposed to adhere to our legitimate and economical modes of labor. Were it not for the absurd policy (for such we must be allowed to call it) of breaking up our circuits into hardly self-supporting "stations," and of gradually abolishing the local ministry, instead of a want

we should now, probably, have an excess of candidates.* A single western conference (Illinois) received last year *forty-four* probationers, making its list of candidates *seventy-two*, and more numerous by twenty-seven than its whole list of effective members! Another conference received twenty-five, giving it a probationers' list of forty-four; another twenty-three, giving it forty-seven candidates; another twenty-one, giving it thirty-three. The itinerant ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North and South) now numbers six thousand five hundred men; the Roman Catholics report but about one thousand one hundred; the Protestant Episcopalians about one thousand five hundred; the Congregational orthodox about one thousand six hundred; the old school-Presbyterians about two thousand; the new school one thousand five

* These unfortunate changes are also ascribed to the "demands of the times," a very convenient but fallacious excuse for something worse. It will hardly be pleaded that Methodism in America is in advance of English Methodism in the intelligence or good taste of its people; the latter, however, finds no difficulty in keeping up itinerancy and a powerful constantly-working local ministry, in both country and city. We hope the old metropolis of American Methodism, Baltimore, will hesitate long to follow the example of our other cities in these "reforms." There are advantages in the change, but how dearly are they paid for!

hundred; the Baptists about five thousand one hundred.* These comparative statements show that Methodism is prolific in its resources of men if not of other means for its ministry. The supply would be up to its necessities if not above them, were it not for the late impolitic deviations from its old and successful itinerant plans; and even as it is, we believe that with suitable aids and encouragements, such as other denominations provide, we could, even now, command a superabundance of candidates.

This fact is worthy of special remark. It is quite unique in the current history of the American Churches. While our sister denominations are universally lamenting the decrease of their theological students, we, with local exceptions, rejoice amidst multiplying candidates.† The fact is full of providential significance; it corresponds with what we have said of the great providential mission yet awaiting Methodism in this land; it corresponds further with the new

* This includes all its preachers, whether pastors or not. If our local preachers were included in the estimate of the Methodist ministry, its amount would be more than trebled. The above calculations were made in 1852.

† Our first theological school, while yet in its infancy, has grown to be numerically the third in the nation, and will probably soon be the first.

demands of our cause which have been stated. For the latter we should avail ourselves of it in two ways.

First. We should be more choice in our selections from these increasing candidates. Would that we could impress the remark upon our conferences! Let us learn that piety, though the chief, is not the only qualification for the ministry; that *gifts* as well as *graces* are required by our own standards; and that now, more than at any other period of our history, is this double criterion necessary. We certainly are not yet as cautious in this respect as our circumstances require; energetic zeal, without ability, if successful in its first efforts, or under special circumstances, is too readily taken as the certain pledge of enduring usefulness; and the untrained novice is urged into the conference, to be too often an encumbrance ever after, suffering himself as well as inflicting suffering on the Church for the ill-advised ugency of his brethren.

Further: This increasing supply of men should lead to more delay in their admission to the ministerial service, and thereby secure better preparation for it. This policy would be wise even in such conferences as suffer somewhat through lack of laborers. The precipitancy

with which we have pressed young men into our laborious ministry has been a crying evil. It has sent hosts of them to premature graves. It has inflicted upon many physical disabilities which have subtracted from their usefulness through life. It has occasioned a startling ineffective list, which draws upon the resources of the Church for support, and suffers notwithstanding, amidst our very altars. There are now *five hundred and eleven* superannuated and supernumerary preachers reported in our Minutes —nearly *one-eighth* of our whole ministry.* Our ministerial tables of mortality have scarcely a parallel. Nearly half of all the Methodist preachers whose deaths have been recorded, fell before they were thirty years of age. The time spent in the itinerant work by six hundred and seventy-two has been ascertained: one hundred and ninety-nine spent from two to five years; two hundred and nine from five to twelve; one hundred and twenty-nine from twelve to twenty-five; ninety from twenty-five to forty; thirty-two from forty to fifty; and thirteen from fifty to sixty-one. *About two-thirds died after twelve years' itinerant service.*

* This includes not the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Much of this astonishing mortality is attributable to the haste with which we have urged youthful laborers into our hard service. What a waste of not only health and life, but of usefulness has this blindly-zealous policy occasioned! There are apologetic considerations connected with the subject, we know, but none which fully justify us.

We have amended in this respect, but not sufficiently. Few sights could be more impressive than an assembled Methodist conference, for it presents the best example of what moral heroism is yet extant in our world; but there are painful detractions from the scene. It is scattered over with pallid and decayed men, who ought to be in the prime of manly vigor. It is composed too much, and, we fear, increasingly, of immature men,* whose juvenile and yet often enfeebled aspect, seems out of place there—men who have too early been subjected to the labors and anxieties of our ministry, and who find that they can make up for their deficient preparation only by the sacrifice of their health. Better for them, in body and mind, would it be, did we retain our old circuits, for

* Bishop Soule, some years since, in a published letter referred with emphatic regret to this fact.

these would require fewer mental resources, and supply invigorating bodily exercise; but appointed, as they mostly are, to isolated and hardly self-supporting stations, amidst the rivalries of older sects how can they sustain their positions without sacrificing themselves?

This offering of human hecatombs at our altars should cease, and should cease right speedily: whatever plea of necessity for it once existed has virtually ceased. Our younger candidates should be reserved—recognized, but reserved—on a Wesleyan "reserve list," and aided in their intellectual preparation for the work in such manner as to relieve them afterward from the pressure under which so many now sink.

And this should be the case, we repeat, not only in the older but also in the more recent fields of our ministerial work. In arguing that the later fields will still indefinitely demand our old ministerial style and methods, we have not implied that the intellectual advancement of the ministry was to be confined to the older conferences—assuredly not! If genuine ability is anywhere needed, it is in the great arena which has been described as now opening for the final moral conflicts of the country; and such ability not only in natural rudeness, but cultivated and

even accomplished, may find there a most appropriate field of exertion, and find also in the severities of our itinerant methods congenial occasions of heroism and self-sacrifice.

There is, we fear, still lingering among us, and only half latent, a fallacious apprehension that intellectual improvement, pushed to any considerable advancement in our ministry, would be hurtful to its old purity and energy. We forget that Methodism, like the Reformation, like modern missions, and like almost every other great movement of the evangelical world, had its birth in an institution of learning. "It sounded its first trumpet," says some one, "and commenced its march over the world, from within the gates of a university." Most of its great leaders were learned men. Wesley, its founder and legislator, was the Fellow of a college; Charles Wesley, its psalmist, was a collegian in the same university; Coke, its first American bishop, and the founder of its missions, bore the highest title of the learned world; Benson was a university student; Fletcher was the president of a theological school; Clarke was a student of universal knowledge. Among our own great names are those of Ruter, Emory, Fisk, Olin, and others of the

dead and the living. Were these men unfitted for the demands of Methodism by their intellectual culture? Were they less devoted, less useful, less faithful to the peculiar duties of our system than their uneducated fellow-laborers? And would a ministry generally composed of just such men be unsuitable for even the hardest demands of our work? No, no; mental capacity does not imply moral incapacity. Methodism is compatible with large minds, as well as large hearts, and can employ them on the sublimest scale of their powers. We soberly believe that such minds, imbued with the evangelic spirit, can find nowhere else a more congenial sphere of self-devotion and self-development. Men of less capacity have been signally useful among us, but it has been appropriately asked, "What would be the standing of Methodism at this moment, if the mass of our ministry had added to their natural powers the acquired talents of such men?" Its banners would in all probability be waving over most of the world.

Let us then heed those indications of Providence which call upon us better to supply our candidates with qualifications for their work. In meeting our present necessities, let us select such as are maturest in mind and body, not

always the most talented or the most devoted; for these, if feeble or young, may be prematurely sacrificed, but, in either case, may be rendered more useful by a preparatory delay.

The extraordinary fact of our large (though, for unnecessary reasons, still deficient) supply of preachers, and the convenience which, with right management, it offers for a "reserve" corps, should, we think, receive extraordinary attention from the Church. Few facts in our history have been more available for the fuller development of our ministerial energies. Our wise men should study to turn it to advantage, devising for this purpose most "liberal things." Such, too, is the popular demand among us for the intellectual improvement of the ministry, notwithstanding the "half-latent" prejudice mentioned, that it cannot be doubted the Church would respond with the promptest generosity to any plan for the benefit of its younger ministry, the ministry to which it is to commit its children, and with which are associated therefore its tenderest solicitudes.

But what plan shall we adopt for this preparatory training?

Presuming that we have thus far carried along with us the concurrence of most if not all

our readers, it might only mar the influence of this appeal to conclude it with a discussion of debated plans of ministerial improvement. However slight may be that influence, we would have it unimpaired on the subjects thus far treated, for we deem them among the paramount Methodist questions of the day. Relying, however, on the forbearance which we have already bespoken, we shall venture to submit a few suggestions on the question just proposed.

First, then, we think a *reserved list* should be kept by each conference, bearing the names of candidates who may not be immediately prepared for the ministry, and especially of promising young men who, even if the conference is not abundantly supplied, should nevertheless be reserved for better preparation and riper years, as this policy would be an economical one in the result. Such a relation of candidates to the conference, however slight, would be better than none at all. Though not admitted, they would at least be recognized. A tie, now unknown among us, would connect them with the "regular ministry," and not be without a partial influence. Whether this delay leads them to our institutions of learning, or to continue yet awhile in secular business, they will be more

inclined to bear in mind and prepare for their destined work; their reading and local exercises in preaching would have more habitual reference to it.

Second. We should provide *a course of study* for this reserved corps. A course of study for our local preachers has been provided, and will tend much to elevate this branch of our ministerial service. The same course would do for reserved candidates, and brethren who design to remain in the local ranks. The success of any such requirement must, however, depend upon its *authoritative* character; it should, therefore, be subject to the official care of the presiding elder, and accompanied with regular examinations, in the presence of either the quarterly conference or a committee of its ministerial members. Some sort of *system*, in other words, with *personal responsibilities*, is necessary if we would have the design effective: and those who may object to our further suggestions, should see that something precise and practicable, on the plan here mentioned, be provided as the only security against further demands.

Third. Many of the best minds among us think the time has come in which the Church should require higher literary prerequisites, and

provide means for the better *education of candidates*, or at least of such as have not themselves the means. The cardinal religious denominations of the country have such provisions in the form of "Education Societies." They are important features in the philanthropic finances of some of these denominations. It has been complained that, though no Church has more promising claimants of such aid than ours, and none needs it more, yet none has shown less disposition to provide it. Men now in our own ministry, it is said, have been compelled to receive assistance from the Education Societies of sister Churches. If the comparative paucity of our resources, or the urgency of other interests, have heretofore excused us from this claim, it is contended we cannot plead the excuse any longer. We now abound in resources, and it cannot be doubted that any financial project, sanctioned by our leading minds, and proposing an obvious advantage to the Church, can command any necessary liberality from it: its popularity and success will indeed generally be proportionate to the generosity and greatness of its designs. Has the time come, then, for the formation of an "Education Society" among us,

for the better preparation of our ministerial candidates: a great, a denominational society, which shall take rank by the side of our leading financial schemes? This project need not involve the question of theological schools, nor any particular standard of ministerial training. It could, like similar societies in other Churches, provide merely a given annual appropriation for the support of candidates in our academies or colleges, subject to few and general restrictions. Personally we are not prepared to say how far such an institution would be applicable to the present circumstances of the denomination; so strong, however, is the demand for educated, or at least intellectual men, for the pulpits of our Atlantic churches, that it is believed our people would take no ordinary interest in it, provided it were projected on a scale of commanding proportions.

Fourth. There are not a few among us who believe that *institutions expressly for theological education* are appropriate to our present circumstances. Whether justly or otherwise, there is also in the Church a vast amount of not only popular but intelligent opposition to such institutions. The primitive Methodist preachers, as we have described them, were, it is justly

affirmed, the mighty men of their day, but they came not forth from theological seminaries. It is replied, on the other hand, that they were providentially raised up for their times; that the times have changed, not in respect to the work, but the workmen; that Providence, which especially fitted them for their times, now indicates that we should ourselves aid in the preparation. The first preachers of Christianity, it is argued, were miraculously qualified for this work, but when the early exigencies of the Church were past, miraculous gifts ceased, and the task of providing pastors was devolved upon the Church; and, continues the argument, you might as well contend that your missionaries need not study the language of China in order to preach there, because the apostles had the miraculous gift of tongues, as to object to theological education, because they or the first preachers of Methodism were not academically trained.

The advocates of theological schools complain that they have not been favored with a fair hearing through our authorized publications. Whatever may be the opposition of the reader to their scheme, we are sure he will be willing to hear them impartially. To silence

this charge, as well as to present candidly their views, we cannot do better than to give the following rather ardent quotation from one of the most enthusiastic among them.

"Such institutions," he says, "were not considered by the founder of Methodism to be foreign to its genius and interests. In the very first conference he ever held, he himself proposed such a measure; the proposition was repeated in the second session, and was never lost sight of by the Wesleyan connection during the long interval that elapsed before its resources enabled it to embody the design in its present noble seminaries. The success of the measure has demonstrated its wisdom. . . . . Have not our circumstances as a Church changed? Are we not able to afford our ministry the intellectual qualifications which once they could not obtain but by special endowment? And is it not clear, from the whole history of Providence, that when such ability exists, its special interposition ceases? It would be a curse on the world for Divine Providence to supersede the necessity of our self-dependence as individuals, or as communities. Our fathers are passing away. Providence supplies us no more with such men, and thereby clearly indicates our

duty to qualify our ministry according to the means which he gives us. He will still call men to his work, but we must open the way for them. We propose not to *make* preachers of his word, but only to aid those whom he has evidently called to preach it. Who dares object to such a proposal? Providence has led us along from one improvement to another, until now this great want stands in our way like a mountain, with its summit glorious with light. We cannot pass round it; let us, then, go over it, that our ministry may, like Moses, come down to the people with their brows radiant with its brightness. . . . . Under our old system the repetition of a few well-studied subjects could take the place of fifty under our present arrangement. This is no detraction from the old system—it was one of its best points of adaptation to an uneducated ministry. But now we fix untrained men in small stations, amid the closest competition, where they are overburdened with pastoral duties, which were unknown to our fathers, and expect them to maintain our cause with success among a population the most enlightened on the globe. How is it possible for a young man without discipline, without a knowledge of books or of men,

to furnish instruction for two years under such circumstances? A few of our most vigorous minds may nerve themselves for the necessities of such a position, but the mass of the ministry must necessarily fall into the rear of the educated ministries of other sects. . . . . It is objected that education will pervert our young men. This is one of those Vandal sentiments which I hardly know how to discuss. Is it a question, in this day, whether education is favorable or injurious to virtue? Why, then, have we not waited for its decision before establishing our academies and colleges? Are we afraid that Methodism in particular cannot consist with intelligence? Then it cannot be true: and the sooner we discover our delusion the better. Methodism is compatible with intelligence. Some of the greatest intellects have grown up under its influence; its glorious theology and mighty system are suited to the highest minds; and in no other Church can a great mind have freer scope for its powers. But how does this objection agree with fact? Have our learned men been perverted? Have they not been among the holiest and most useful men in our Church? Did learning corrupt Wesley, Fletcher, Coke, or Benson? Whose

memory is more sacred among us than Fisk's? And was he perverted by learning? Was Ruter, who left the presidency of a college for the sufferings of a missionary, one of the examples from which this objection is drawn? Was Emory another? Our most learned men have been our holiest men. They have been the stanchest friends of our doctrines and our discipline, because their capacious minds have the better comprehended their excellence. And is not this the case with the young men who come into the ministry from our learned institutions? Where do you find better pastors and more devoted preachers than they? It is mortifying that Methodism should still be trameled and enervated by such petty prejudices. We Methodists do not yet comprehend the sublimity and promise of our cause. We have been deluded by the impression that ours is a particular and not a general system—that it is applicable to a particular class, but not to all classes. Methodism is universal in its adaptation. We are bearing up unconsciously before the world the ensigns of the Millennium. Our doctrines and measures have been transforming other sects; they are to reach the savage and the sage, the slave and the sovereign. We be-

lieve it, because we believe they are the truth. Give, then, to Methodism a free action. Let it appropriate to itself all auxiliaries, especially learning. Its gigantic plans are suited for gigantic powers. Throw the energies of a sanctified and educated ministry into its potent system, and it will produce results which we have not yet imagined. . . . . Once more: it is asserted that 'the history of theological schools, in all ages, shows their influence to be corrupting.' If we object to theological schools because they have been abused, we may also object to nearly every other great measure. Episcopacy was observed in the early Church as much as theological schools; must we abandon it on that account? The press has been foully abused; are we therefore to turn it out of our Book Concern? Religion has been perverted in every detail; shall we therefore turn atheists? The reason of the corruption of theological schools was the corruption of all knowledge. Theological, like all other schools, will of course be affected by the intellectual state of the age in which they exist. It was the general prevalence of the new Platonism that introduced error into the Alexandrian school. But it introduced it everywhere else also. It infected

Philo the Jew, and Longinus the Pagan, as well as Origen the Christian. It was the introduction of the Aristotelian dialectics that produced the metaphysical absurdities of the schools of the middle ages; but they infected every other department of knowledge, alike with theology. They were the intellectual characteristics of the times, deluding the monk in his secluded meditations, as well as the student in the school. But we live in a different age; science is now more thoroughly verified; a new mode of inquiry has been introduced, which will never allow a similar confusion of knowledge. There may be new corruptions in theology, but they cannot originate as did those upon which the objection is founded; they will be such as will be more likely to be prevented than favored by knowledge. Theological schools have, indeed, like all other good institutions of religion, been corrupted; but, like all others, they have also been blessed. It would seem, from history, that Providence has wedded religion and knowledge, and signalized their union in most of the great events of the Church. The first rays of returning daylight, after the dark ages, streamed forth upon the world from the cloisters of the University of Wittemberg. It was from its gates

that Martin Luther came forth, with the Bible in his hands, to summon the world to its moral resurrection. It was from the University of Geneva that Calvin, at the same time, was sounding the alarm among the Alps. And where did the next great revival of Christianity take place? It was among the theological students of Oxford. Yes! Methodism, now so fearful of ministerial education, first awoke in the cradle of English learning. It sounded its first trump, and commenced its march over the world, in the gates of a university. Where did the first conception of foreign missions, from the American Churches, originate? Within the walls of a theological school; and from that school have gone to the pagan world a greater number of devoted men than from any other source in our land. The theological school at Basle, in Switzerland, has been one of the greatest fountains of religious influence that is in Europe. The one at Geneva is now the chief instrumentality in restoring the principles of the Reformation to Switzerland and France. The great defenders of religion have nearly all been educated theologians. Science has no legitimate tendency to evil; it is the echo of the same voice which speaks in revelation. Reve-

lation itself has as often been used for the support of error, as science; and the one must be rejected on the same ground that the other is."

After this long insertion, we hope there will be no charge of timid partiality on the question, against this publication at least. The extract certainly has ardor enough, if it has not an excess of argument. We leave our readers to judge of the latter. They are as competent as ourselves to distinguish between its logic and its rhetoric.

It is due to the advocates of this measure to say, that they are of various opinions respecting it. Some of them think that departments of theological instruction, suitable for the preparation of ministerial candidates, can be connected with our academies and colleges. Others, though very few, we suppose, advocate a high theological seminary, modeled after the best in other Churches, and requiring considerable preparatory, if not collegiate, training—a proposition which appears to us practically absurd in the present circumstances of our ministry. Others, and doubtless the greatest number, propose separate seminaries, on the plan of the "Wesleyan Theological Institutions," which shall be adapted to the actual wants of the

student, whatever may be the deficiencies of his education, and shall combine with their intellectual advantages thorough training in such social and pastoral habits as may especially befit his future office: they would have them be "schools of the prophets,"—ministerial households, maintained under a strictly-religious regimen, and excluding the perverting influences and invidious prejudices which they allege would affect our young candidates in common academies or colleges. Such is the experiment now being made among our brethren of the eastern States.

We have thus attempted to show what was the *character of our primitive ministry;* how far its *preaching and methods* are still needed; what *improvements*, homiletic ones at least, are required by the times; and some of the *means* by which it is proposed to secure these improvements. Our cause has reached a maturity and magnitude in this nation which give no little importance to such questions, and we dismiss the subject with the conviction that, however we have failed to do it justice, it cannot fail to command the interest of our readers.

ESSAY IX.

METHODIST PREACHING — DISTINGUISHED EXAMPLES.

Peculiar Advantages of Methodism for Men of Talent — Characteristics of Summerfield — His History — Peculiarities of his Eloquence — Habits as an Extemporizer — Personal Traits — Death — Cookman — Biographical Facts — Style of his Eloquence — His Appearance — His Martial Spirit — Bascom — His Personal Advantages — Style — Defects and Excellences of his Genius — Fisk — His Appearance — Vocal Advantage — Manner in the Pulpit — Polemical Propensity — Christian Perfection — Estimate of his Talents — Olin — His Religious Character — Social Character — Scholarship—Eloquence — Anecdote — Style — Opinions — Comparative Remarks — Conclusion.

After affirming, on a preceding page, that there were scattered all through our ranks able representatives of the great modern interests of Christianity, as well as of its ordinary pulpit instructions, we remarked that "our ministry has not been without a class of men preëminent even above these, for reputation at least—'men of renown' in the Church." Summerfield, Bascom, Fisk, and Olin, were named as examples.

The peculiar unity of our Church, resulting from its itinerant episcopacy, and the interchange of its pastors, has been highly favorable to the reputation of such men. They have been

recognized as the common representatives and common favorites of the denomination. They moved extensively through its territory, not as foreign visitors, but as honored members of one great family, leaders in the common pastorate. In no other denomination of the land has this sentiment of fraternity been so prevalent and so characteristic. Besides its moral beauty, it has been of no little practical value; a great idea, a great deed, or a great man, has always had a wider sway among us than among other Churches. While the reputation of eminent preachers in more localized or more restricted communions has been analogous to that of leaders in the State legislatures, the fame of our distinguished preachers, and its moral power, has been analogous to the national fame and influence of our great congressional leaders. With the increase and consolidation of the Church this advantage is disappearing—perhaps inevitably. It gave to the class of men referred to a standing among us, similar to that which the great preachers of the age of Louis XIV. occupied among the clergy of France. We may have hereafter as great men intrinsically, but they can hardly wield as extended a sway over the general mind of the Church.

We propose to attempt, in this our concluding chapter, characteristic sketches of some of our most notable preachers,—not elaborate estimates or finished portraits, but rapid drawings—"sketches," as our title says—and not for the purpose of presenting them as pulpit models, but as pulpit studies, affording examples of both excellences and defects, and at the same time not without interest as specimens of personal character.

SUMMERFIELD was the first of general fame, and, unquestionably, one of the very best.

Fragrant still are the associations of that endeared name. A chaste style; fertility of good but not extraordinary thought, adorned frequently, however, by apposite figures; the facility of a remarkably colloquial manner, which made his hearers feel as if they had a sort of interlocutory participation in the discourse; and, above all, an indescribably sweet spirit of piety—the very personality of the speaker sanctified, and revealing itself in his tones, looks, and gestures—were the traits of this extraordinary man.

This manifestation of his personal characteristics had nothing, however, of egotism about it.

It was not preaching himself instead of Christ, but Christ in himself, as well as in his subject; so that Christ was presented at once both "objectively" and "subjectively," as the Germans would say, and thus became "all in all." The fame of few men has depended less upon original talent, and more on personal dispositions, than that of Summerfield. Though the most transcendent in his reputation, he was, at the same time, the most imitable of our eminent preachers. Simplicity, placidity, meekness, and a colloquial manner, combined with good but not great ideas, certainly would seem to be of easy acquisition. Still the imitation of the excellences of a model, however desirable, is often found exceedingly difficult. To copy a model entire is impracticable, and always results in absurd defects, for the moral idiosyncrasies of men give an individuality to their character and manner which must remain inexorably distinct from all resemblances, as the differences of faces show themselves notwithstanding any similarity of features. Only such as are similar in these idiosyncrasies could possibly imitate each other's excellences. Henry B. Bascom would have become ridiculous with the pulpit manner of John Summerfield. Men, however, of tranquil

dispositions, of neat style and ready flow of thought, ranking now only at mediocrity, might place his example before them with peculiar advantage. A deep consecration like his, a simple and direct aim to reach the heart rather than inflame the imagination of the hearer, the melting and outflowing of one's whole individuality in the discourse—these are not difficult to such men, and a better example of what success they can attain is not on record than that of Summerfield.

The best judges, who were familiar with Summerfield's preaching, find it impossible to tell precisely in what its interest consisted.

We venture to repeat that the solution of the problem is to be found mostly, if not wholly, in what the French would call the *naturel* of the man—the beautiful compatibility between the preacher and his preaching—a harmony that revealed itself in his looks, his tones, his gestures, and all the subtler indications of verbal style, mental aptitudes, and moral dispositions. We have only to suppose him strongly characterized by other traits than those mentioned, to perceive at once that he must have been an entirely different preacher. Had he possessed the same intellectual capacities, but been *brusque*,

or denunciatory, or satirical—had he been tinged strongly with moroseness, misanthropy, or self-conceit, his pulpit characteristics would have been different; he never could have won the peculiar fame which attaches to his memory; he would probably have gone down to the grave without public distinction. With a mind susceptible of all graceful impressions, a heart whose sensibility was feminine—yet with such femininenes as we ascribe to angels, and think of as consistent with mighty though serene strength—he united the very sanctity of religion and a simplicity of purpose which saved him utterly from the affectations or artifices that might have marred his character, and quite changed the effect of his preaching.

Montgomery, the poet, expressed a just critical estimate of him when he said:—

"Summerfield had intense animal feeling, and much of morbid imagination; but of poetic feeling, and poetic imagination, very little—at least there is very little trace of either in anything that he has left, beyond a few vivid but momentary flashes in his sermons."

This "animal feeling," however, must be understood to have been refined and intensified by divine grace into the holiest moral affections;

so that the sympathetic instincts of the natural heart became in him pure religious passions, and seemed such as might befit the bosom of a seraph.

His appearance in the pulpit was expressive of his character, and contributed much to the effect of his discourse. Though his face possessed nothing at first and near view remarkably striking or agreeable, yet when irradiated with the fervor of his feelings, it was angelically beautiful. The portrait which accompanied Holland's memoir is considered a good one, but it fails to represent the glowing life that played over his features and radiated from his eyes. The languor of disease could not mar this moral beauty; it rather enhanced it, by adding a delicacy which could not fail to associate with the hearer's admiration a sentiment of tender and even loving sympathy. His voice was not strong, but exceedingly flexible and sweet, and harmonized always with the vibrations of his feelings. His gestures did not violate the rules of the art, but seemed not the result of it. They were unexceptionably natural, and yet naturally conformed to the art. He was, in fine, so exempt from artifice, he so entirely surrendered himself to the occasion and its concomitants, whatever

they might be, that he spontaneously fell into unison with them, and seemed naturally and immediately to acquire that mastery over them which the highest art cannot always command. This is the truest genius. Genius is not independent of art, but it is its prerogative often to assume it intuitively, reaching its results without its labors. Labor is an important aid to genius, unquestionably; the latter is seldom notably successful without the former; and yet the great characteristic of genius is the facility, the indolent ease, even, with which it accomplishes what art, without genius, reaches only through elaborate assiduity. Genius suffers more than it labors, but it suffers not so much in action as in reaction. Its sensibility is what mainly gives it success, but it often inflicts misery also.

Though in the delivery of his sermons there was this facility—felicity we might call it—in their preparation he was a laborious student. He was a hearty advocate of extempore preaching, and would have been deprived of most of his popular power in the pulpit by being confined to a manuscript; yet he knew the importance of study, and particularly of the habitual use of the pen in order to success in extemporaneous

speaking. His own rule was to prepare a skeleton of his sermon, and after preaching it, write it out in fuller detail, filling up the original sketch with the principal thoughts which had occurred to him in the process of the discourse. The first outline was, however, in accordance with the rule we have elsewhere given for extempore speaking, viz., that the perspective of the entire discourse—the leading ideas, from the exordium to the peroration—should be noted on the manuscript, so that the speaker shall have the assurance that he is supplied with a consecutive series of good ideas, good enough to command the respect of his audience, though he should fail of any very important impromptu thoughts. This rule we deem the most essential condition of success in extemporaneous preaching. It is the best guarantee of that confidence and self-possession upon which depends the command of both thought and language. Summerfield followed it even in his platform speeches. Montgomery notices the minuteness of his preparations in nearly two hundred manuscript sketches.

He exemplified his own views respecting the use of the pen, as an aid to extempore style. Besides the large number of sermons and

sketches just mentioned, filling seven post-octavo volumes, he left two considerable volumes, one "a counting-house leger," filled with exegetical notes on the Scriptures, in such minute penmanship, and with so many abbreviations, that it is said they can scarcely be "deciphered without a glass."

A volume of his sermons and sketches of sermons has been published. They afford no evidence of the transcendent power of the preacher. The "skeletons" contained in this volume illustrate, however, his pulpit style; to such as heard him often they must recall the image and indescribable manner of the preacher, his facility of thought, his colloquial and abrupt style, the fervent variability of his feelings. They may be taken also as specimens of his outline preparations. Not only are the leading thoughts noted, but abundance of illustrative details also. The pithy Scripture allusions with which they abound are characteristic of his discourses; his own diction was sententiously Saxon, but its terseness and simple beauty were continually enhanced by remarkably apt Biblical phrases. His style was a mosaic of pertinent and beautiful texts. The quotation of a single word would sometimes terminate a climax with brilliant

effect, or conclude an illustration with epigrammatic significance.

There was one respect in which Summerfield was a model for all public speakers, viz., in the ease, as we have described it, with which he undertook his pulpit tasks. Doubtless he felt the usual anxieties of preparation, in the study; but having made his preparations, and committed them and himself to God in prayer, he seemed to enter upon his public duties disburdened of all care. There was no elaborate effort of thought or language—no fluttering after lofty flights. If, as we have said, preparation is the most essential condition of success in extemporaneous discourse, this facility, this self-possession, the result of preparation and of the absence of all egotistical aims, is assuredly the second. We affirm that failure is next to impossible to him who acquires the habit of preparation. Who that has a suitable supply of thoughts, on a given subject, would expect to fail of an easy communication of them in his family circle, at the fire-side? The right language will come to him "of itself," and the right modulation, and, if the subject demands it, pathos, solemnity, or denunciation. How naturally does he assume the appropriate expression both of voice and

gesture! Why can we not have equal facility in the pulpit? Mostly because of the restraints which our powers suffer from our egotistical anxieties, our attempts to do something great. Simplicity is an element of all true greatness. He that would be successful, especially in public speaking, should study his subject till, as we have above said, he feels that he has provided lessons which his hearers will respect, and then, unanxious about himself, simply intent on the task before him, enter directly and calmly into it. He will soon lose himself in his subject. Language better than he could ever have elaborated in the study will flow from his lips. His sincere and self-possessed spirit will be susceptible to the pathos, the severity, or the dignity which the different phases of his theme inspire. A natural and therefore beautiful compatibility will usually exist between his subject and his own mood, and not unfrequently the latter will be exalted by the former to the loftiest elevations of thought. This we again affirm was Summerfield's great pulpit characteristic.

What would have been the effect of years on the eloquence of Summerfield? The question occurs to us very naturally, and is a curious one at least. We so spontaneously associate his

juvenile delicacy and beauty with the impression of his preaching, that we can hardly conceive of him as the same man, in middle life or old age. He was but about twenty years old when he began to preach, but twenty-three when he arrived in America, and only twenty-seven when he died. His personal appearance first excited the anxiety of the hearer, next won his sympathy, until he discovered in it at last, by the contrast of his mature and resplendent ability, only an additional reason for wonder and admiration. The circumstances under which his second appearance in public, after his arrival in this country, took place, very happily concurred to enhance this advantage. It was on the anniversary platform of the American Bible Society. A masterly address had just been pronounced by an eminent clergyman; murmurs of applause were audible in the assembly. Dr. Bethune, who was present, says:—

"The chair announced the Rev. Mr. Summerfield, from England. 'What presumption!' said my clerical neighbor; 'a boy like that to be set up after a giant!' But the stripling came in the name of the God of Israel, armed with 'a few smooth stones from the brook' that flows 'hard by the oracles of God.' His motion was one of

thanks to the officers of the society for their labors during the year; and of course he had to allude to the president, then reposing in another part of the house; and thus he did it:—'When I saw that venerable man, too aged to warrant the hope of being with you at another anniversary, *he reminded me of Jacob leaning upon the top of his staff, blessing his children before he departed.*' He then passed on to encourage the society by the example of the British institution. 'When we first launched our untried vessel upon the deep, the storms of opposition roared, and the waves dashed angrily around us, and we had hard work to keep her head to the wind. We were faint with rowing, and our strength would soon have been gone, but we cried, "Lord, save us, or we perish!" *When a light shone upon the waters, and we saw a form walking upon the troubled sea, like unto that of the Son of God, and he drew near the ship, and we knew that it was Jesus; and he stepped upon the deck, and laid his hand on the helm, and he said unto the winds and waves, Peace, be still, and there was a great calm.* Let not the friends of the Bible fear; God is in the midst of us. God shall help us, and that right early.' In such a strain he went on to the close. 'Wonderful!

wonderful!' said my neighbor the critic; 'he talks like an angel from heaven.'"

"He talked like an angel," not merely because his thoughts were excellent, but because the visible man, clothed with physical delicacy and youthfulness, and glowing with moral beauty, seemed an embodiment of your ideal of an angelic apparition. Riper years would doubtless have modified this peculiar charm of his youthfulness; but we doubt that they could have marred the effect of his eloquence; we doubt it, for the good reason that his oratory was perfectly natural. Being natural, it would have been permanent as his nature, taking new hues from the changes of life, but only such as being congenial with those changes would render it congruous with them—would sustain his beautiful naturalness. We suppose, therefore, that if Summerfield's eloquence had lost some of its juvenile traits in maturer years, it would have gained in riper and richer qualities, as good wine gains in zest, though it loses in sweetness, by age. Emanating as it did from the very nature of the man, we can imagine it to have retained its essential charm uninjured, though varied, even in old age; and if John Summerfield had lived to hoary years, we can

conceive of him only as the St. John of his day —the beloved disciple, who still saw the visions of God, and upon whose lips, as was said of Plato, bees from the flowers had shed their honey.

In private life Summerfield was, if possible, still more interesting than in the pulpit. He was fertile in conversation. He had a flowing but delicate humor, quite Addisonian in its character, always appropriate but never sarcastic. His extraordinary memory rendered him familiar with the names of all who were introduced to him, even children and servants—he seldom or never forgot them. Above all, he had the happy faculty of introducing into all circles appropriate subjects of religious conversation. There was no cant about him, no overweening endeavor to impress the eager groups around him with a sense of his clerical scrupulousness, but an unaffected respectfulness, a confiding courtesy, which conciliated the listener and compelled him to look upon any devout remark as happily congruous to the occasion, and even felicitously befitting to the man.

An incurable malady reminded him that he must work while the day lasted, for the night was at hand. He was incessant in his labors,

preaching often from five to ten discourses a week. Besides frequent addresses, in which he was remarkably happy, he delivered about four hundred sermons in the first year and a half of his ministry. Throughout his brief but laborious career he bore about with him that "morbid feeling" of which Montgomery speaks, and which seems indeed a usual pathological accompaniment of genius.* His conversion was clear and decided, yet in his subsequent religious experience he was subject to severe inward conflicts, and Holland has justly remarked that "the light of spiritual illumination in *him* (whatever may have been the case in *others*) did not *uninterruptedly* shine 'brighter and brighter unto the perfect day;' but clouds and darkness frequently intercepted the rays of that Sun of righteousness which had so evidently arisen on his soul. Indeed, the Lord seems to have led his servant, not with the shadow by day, and the glory by night, of the pillar of cloud and fire, but *alternately*, amidst perpetual natural gloom, presenting to him the light of the flame that cheered the Israelites on the verge of the Red Sea, and the darkness behind that frowned upon

* "Genius," says Heyne, the German, "is a disease, as the pearl is in the oyster."

the Egyptians their pursuers. But God who is 'love,' was equally present to him in the splendor and terror—in the hidings as in the revealings of his face—and by that mysterious dispensation, we cannot doubt, led him, as the best mode of guidance, through the sea and the wilderness, over Jordan to Canaan and Jerusalem, which is above."

This was his discipline; he needed it amidst the perilous flatteries of his success. It was probably one of the most effectual causes of that profound humility which was at once the protection and the charm of his saintly character. Could we read the inmost history of most of the mighty men of God in the earth, we should find that they have been summoned by him to confront, like Moses, the fiery terrors of Sinai, or like Daniel, to call upon him from the lions' den, or like Paul, to bear with them to the grave the thorn in the flesh.

The youthful hero, wounded in the well-sustained conflict, retired at last to his tent to die. "*Well—yes—well—all is well.*" "I want a *change* —a *change of form*—a change of everything," he said feebly as the last struggle approached. "All—though—sin—has—entered:" but his utterance failed in the quotation. Night came

on; with increased energy he exclaimed, "All's perfection!" "*Good-night!*" were his *last words.*

George G. Cookman disappeared from our midst by a terrible disaster in the prime of his manhood, and at a period in his ministerial career when the star of his fame seemed about to culminate, and attract the gaze not only of the Church but of the nation. If he had not a reputation co-extensive with that of the other characters sketched in these pages, none who knew him can doubt that it would have sooner or later ranked him with some of them, and beyond others, had it not been for the premature termination of his course.

He was born in 1800, at Hull, England, and came of a good old Wesleyan stock. His father, a man of wealth and of high respectability, was a Methodist local preacher, and his early domestic education tended to form the son for the work of his life. While yet very young he gave evidence of his peculiar capabilities for public speaking, on the platform of Sunday-school and juvenile-missionary anniversaries. Some of these efforts of his childhood are said to have excited extraordinary interest.

In his eighteenth year the death of a young

friend left a profound impression upon his mind, which resulted in his conversion. When about twenty-one years old he visited this country, on business for his father, and while at Schenectady, New-York, received the impression that it was his duty to devote his life to the Christian ministry. He began there, we believe, his labors as a local preacher. In 1821 he returned to Hull, and entered into business with his father, exercising his talents meanwhile zealously in the Wesleyan local ministry. He continued in his father's firm during four years, but with a restless spirit; his ardent heart panted for entire devotion to Christian labors. So profound was his conviction of his duty in this respect that it visibly affected him; and his father, prizing him, with an Englishman's regard, as his eldest son, and the representative of his family, but perceiving that he "*must go*," gave him up, and bade him depart with God's blessing. Having witnessed the heroic labors and triumphs of the Methodist preachers on this continent, he resolved to join them, and forthwith took passage for Philadelphia. After laboring a few months in that city, as a local preacher, he was received into the Philadelphia Conference in 1826. He continued in the itinerant

ranks, without intermission, the remainder of his life, laboring with indomitable energy, and constantly increasing ability and success, in various parts of Pennsylvania, New-Jersey, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

Mr. Cookman was slight, but sinewy in person, and capable of great endurance. His arms were long, and gave a striking peculiarity to his gestures. His eye was keen and brilliant, his craniological development good, but not remarkable, and his lean features were galvanic with an energy which, Englishman though he was, never allowed any obese accumulations to form beneath them. He had too much soul to admit of fatness. Let not the Falstaff captains in the armies of Israel frown at the remark. "Would he were fatter," said Cæsar of Cassius, —but Cæsar himself was lean, and he feared the leanness of Cassius, because it had meaning in it,—"he thinks too much." Cookman's agile movements scouted with defiance the morbid monster, and kept it ever in distant abeyance. Every nerve and muscle of his lithe frame seemed instinct with the excitement of his subject; even the foot often had its energetic gesture, and he took no little perambulatory range when the limits of the desk or platform

allowed it. The latter was his favorite place; never did popular orator revel more in the licensed liberties of the platform. All his powers were brought out there, and lavished upon the occasion with absolute prodigality,—strong argumentation, dazzling imagery, satire, pathos, wit,—holding his hearers in a spell of close, clear thought, shaking them with resistless strokes of humor, melting them instanter into tears, or, by some energetic or heroic thought, throwing the whole assembly into tumultuous agitation, and provoking from it irrepressible responses. If at such times his manner tended to boisterousness, it seemed compatible with the scene: it is not the zephyr but the mighty rushing wind that shakes and bends the forest.

There was in his voice a strenuous, silvery distinctness, and even music, which enhanced much the effect of his more powerful passages. In a large house, or at a camp-meeting, where he was usually the hero of the field, he could send its pealing notes, with thrilling effect, to the remotest hearer. The hall of Representatives at Washington never echoed more eloquent tones, or more eloquent thoughts, than when he occupied its rostrum during his chaplaincy to Congress. He was peculiarly successful in these

congressional ministrations. Notwithstanding the vast variety of character and prejudice concentrated at the national metropolis, during the legislative sessions, he was a universal favorite. All men about him felt that whether in the humble Methodist pulpit, or amid the magnificence of the national capitol, he was *himself;* and men will generally, if not always, wave their personal prejudices in the presence of talent which stands forth before them in its simple genuineness, while few things can more effectually defeat real ability than attempts to exaggerate it by dissembling artifices. The trickery is not only morally ugly by its disingenuousness, but the popular sagacity, much keener than is commonly supposed, quickly perceives it, and takes an egotistical but honest pride in defying it. Mr. Cookman's sermons before Congress were thoroughly prepared; they were often truly great, but directly to the purpose, and stamped throughout with the honest, earnest individuality of the man. There was much of special adaptation in them. He was always apt in seizing on casual events for the illustration or enforcement of his subjects; but his congressional discourses were peculiarly distinguished by the success with which he

availed himself of the exciting incidents of the place and season. These discourses had also a deep moral effect as well as oratorical interest. Several of his distinguished hearers, both in Congress and in the executive department of the government, were awakened to a personal interest in religion by his powerful appeals.

He was characterized by a sort of chivalry, a martial predilection, which gave him real bravery, and combative promptness and energy. This was one of the strongest elements of his nature. The military events which stirred all Europe during his youth, doubtless had an influence on his forming character. It was affected by even an earlier influence, probably. "Mind is from the mother," says Isaac Taylor, and the characters of great men, especially, begin to form under the impressions of the maternal mind, before their birth. The martial clangor that resounded among the continental states, and filled all the homes of England with loyal heroism, at the end of the last century, had possibly an effect on the *morale* of Cookman. Be this as it may, there was a military fire in him which nothing could extinguish, and which, sanctified by religion, gave an heroic and invincible power to his ministrations. It

influenced his imagery and his very language. It revealed itself in his sermons, in his exhortations, his very prayers, and most especially in his platform addresses. The first of the latter that we open upon in his published "Speeches"* is an example. It marshals the different evangelical sects of the country into a general missionary conflict, and is full of chivalric spirit. His martial temper rendered his assaults on error formidably vigorous. He liked right well a manful encounter, and relished, with epicurean zest, a pungent sarcasm, or a humorous thrust, that scattered in dismay sophistry or skeptical conceit.

He had good sense, and a good amount of it; but his imagination was his dominant faculty. It furnished him incessantly with brilliant illustrations. Besides the minute beauties with which it interspersed his ordinary discourses, it sometimes led him into allegories which might have entertained the dreams of the Old Tinker of Bedford. The martial Bible-Society address at New-Brunswick, in 1828, to which we have

* Speeches delivered on various occasions by Rev. George G. Cookman, of the Baltimore Annual Conference, and Chaplain of the Senate of the United States. New-York: Carlton & Phillips, 200 Mulberry-street.

referred; the mission ship, in his famous Baltimore-Conference speech of 1829; the widow and her daughters, in his American Sunday-School Union speech of 1831; and the personification of Liberalism, (the prodigal son of the "Spy Bigotry,") in his New-York Sunday-school address of 1832, are examples. It can hardly be doubted that had he devoted himself to the production of a work in this rare and difficult department of literature, he might have become a worthy disciple of the glorious old dreamer of Bedford jail. This allegorizing mood, however, befits the poet better than the orator.

In his private life Mr. Cookman had many attractions. His piety was deep, and he was always ready for any good word or work; but his religion never interfered with his enjoyment of life. He relished good fellowship, enlivening conversation, and the entertainment of books. He adhered through life, we believe, to the primitive Methodist costume. It was not the most graceful for his lank person; but under this Quaker-like external primness he carried a large and generous heart—a heart which seemed ever juvenile in the freshness of its sentiments and the ardor of its aspirations.

On the 11th of March, 1841, he embarked in

the ill-fated steamer, President, and was never heard of more.

Henry B. Bascom maintained an extraordinary reputation, as a preacher, down to the last year of his life. He entered the itinerant ministry in 1814, when yet in his teens. During fourteen years he pursued its laborious duties in various parts of the West, and through the next twenty years occupied honorable positions in our literary institutions, either as President or Professor. He was at last elevated to the Episcopal office in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but presided in only one annual conference, on his return from which he was stricken down by death, in the very maturity of his life and his promotion.

In person he was one of the noblest of men—substantially built, well proportioned, with full and manly features, a complexion of English ruddiness, and a highly intellectual cerebral development. His voice was commanding, remarkably orotund, and even melodious, till affected by habitual snuff-taking.

The candid critic must find it difficult to delineate well his pulpit character. His *manner* in the desk was conformed to the rules of the

oratorical art—strictly so. This fact secured him from the irregular violence of voice and gesture to which his impetuous feelings naturally tended, but at the same time rendered his manner factitious and elaborate, especially in passages of studied beauty, where the attempt at effect, however laudable, became too manifest. This was in fine a characteristic of Dr. Bascom's eloquence throughout; devoted as he was to the art, he did not attain that perfection in it by which its labor is concealed or rather superseded. "Nature," some one has said, "is the highest art;" and to get clear of our factitious habits and become æsthetically true to nature, in anything, is perfection. Powerful as were some of Dr. Bascom's efforts, the intelligent hearer could hardly divest himself of the consciousness that he was listening to a proposed example of declamation, and he found his mind spontaneously holding his heart in abeyance, that the former might sit in critical judgment upon the performance, admiring or condemning it. While this was the case with severer minds, the multitude hung upon his discourse usually with more of wonder than of any other emotion. We say *usually*, for there were occasions in which his own excited emotions bore down all criti-

cism, and swept along in a tumultuous current the feelings of high and low. At these times, in spite of his hyberbolic imagery and language, his noble voice assumed its fullest music, and fell into a slight *recitative*, which seemed no fault, but actually enhanced its effect. Some of the ancient writers on oratory speak of this manner as an excellence not uncommon in the classic eloquence. Cicero alludes to it favorably. It may be founded in nature, in a tendency of the sensibilities, when intensely excited, to express themselves in ecstatic and musical tones, analogous to their tendency, under such excitement, to poetic measures in language. We find it still extant among the Quakers, and other sects, though in great exaggeration.

Dr. Bascom's intellect presented a singular combination of excellences and defects. The poet and the dialectician were so mixed in him as not to allow of a distinct development of either, but produced, in his mental operations, such an habitual interplay of the logical and poetical powers as often to confound each other. A severe critic would, we think, usually retire from his preaching, puzzled to discriminate the intrinsic thought and the overlaying imagery of the discourse, and yet compelled to acknowl-

edge that there was a marvelous exhibition of both. He had little or no fancy, but an august imagination. Contrary to the usual habit of imaginative minds, he seemed always inclined to discuss subjects which admitted of elaborate argumentation; yet in conducting his argument he could not proceed with the measured pace of the logician, but must move with the flight of an archangel. Should the hearer divest himself entirely of the propensities of the critic, and give himself up to the poetry of the discourse, he would find himself more satisfied than if, on the contrary, he should sit in judgment on the process of thought alone, or attempt to comprehend both.

The poetic element was, we think, his chief distinction. The strict art with which he studied oratory was not, however, equally applied here; his imagination was often excessive. It lingered not among Hervey's "Reflections in a Flower Garden," but aspiring to a loftier flight, plumed itself among his "Starry Heavens." Many of these flights showed a Miltonian grandeur, but they were oftener exaggerated, and were habitually too frequent. Some of his discourses seemed almost, from beginning to end, a series of elaborated figures, "chained light-

ning," and sometimes, perhaps, owed, like the latter, much of their apparent splendor to the surrounding obscurity. Jupiter, at the request of Semele, came to her arrayed in the thunders and lightnings of the god, but she was consumed at his approach; the plain good sense of popular assemblies is often baffled and confounded by displays of oratorical poetry, and more so in the sanctuary, perhaps, than anywhere else.

Dr. Bascom was self-educated—a means of peculiar advantage to some minds, but to an exuberantly fertile one, like his, the occasion of a lax discipline and distorted growth. He emigrated early to the West; among its vast rivers, prairies, and mountain ranges, he studied the revelations of nature, and his mental character revealed the impression which those grand scenes made upon him. Whatever other defects he had, he showed no effeminacy, no dilution of thought. His ideas were robust, his imagery rugged though luxuriant—all his conceptions seemed naturally to take a character of magnitude, if not magnificence, like that of the scenery with which he was conversant. His literary studies, pursued alone, and in his ministerial travels, could not compete with the influence of the grand associations which sur-

rounded him. The latter formed his intellectual character; the former, though pursued assiduously, failed of their usual chastening effect, so far at least as his pulpit efforts were concerned; and to the last year of his life his preaching retained its original characteristics, though its delivery was somewhat moderated by the use of manuscripts in the desk—an expedient very unwisely recommended by his medical advisers as a relief to a chronic inflammation of the throat.*

He had little of the ease and self-possession which we have recommended. He evidently entered the pulpit bowed under the burden of his task, and his discourse throughout was apparently an extreme effort. It was not unusual for him to spend most of Saturday night in walking his chamber floor, anxiously conning the next day's sermon. Such elaborate attempts often defeat themselves, and Dr. Bascom's failures were not unfrequent. His sermons seemed invariably delivered memoriter, though usually long enough to occupy two hours; if he did not purposely commit them to memory, yet their

* We believe that extemporizers suffer much less than sermon-readers from this ailment; and there are obvious reasons why this should be the case.

frequent repetition fixed in his mind their language as well as their train of thought. They were evidently prepared with the utmost labor. The paragraphs seemed often to be separate but resplendent masses of thought, written at intervals, and without very close relations. This defect added to the obscurity of the discourse as a whole, breaking up its continuity in the mind of the hearer. The elaborateness of his mental processes extended even to his language; it had something of the Latin pomp of Johnson, with the *bizarre* complexity of Carlyle, and often, as a consequence, presented sentences of striking peculiarity and force, notwithstanding its general defectiveness. He frequently coined words, or gave them new applications; the latter, however, were usually traceable to some subtile, etymological reason, and sometimes were marked by beauty and pertinence. His published sermons will not endure; they have not come under the attention of the higher class of critics, and would not, we think, be passable at their bar. Some of his other productions, in which his poetical propensities had no room to play, show that if his education had been such as to effectually discipline his imagination, his real ability would have been greatly enhanced.

His most important writings, besides those prepared for the pulpit, are his "Bill of Rights," written on behalf of the "reform" movement of 1828; the "Protest of the Minority," in the memorable General Conference of 1844; the "Report on Organization," at the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and a subsequent elaborate volume in defence of the Southern Church, entitled "Methodism and Slavery."

In social life Dr. Bascom was not readily appreciated, except by his familiar friends. To others he was taciturn or abrupt, and apparently frigid. There was about him that uneasiness which so often accompanies men of rare powers and marked individuality—the morbid effect, usually, of the honorable but not often honored wounds of hard-fought inward conflicts. He suffered no little misconstruction in this respect, in addition to the suffering which the conscious defect itself inflicted. When Sir Humphrey Davy, by the special permission of Napoleon, visited Paris, at a time when the country was closed to Englishmen, he was conducted by the French savans with great courtesy and eclat to the principal scientific resorts of the city; but no sooner had he left it than a torrent of abuse

overtook him for his "English hauteur"—the stolid pride with which he appeared to receive the attentions of the learned Parisians. His biographer explains the case. It was not pride, but its direct opposite that affected the great English philosopher. His constitutional diffidence—not an uncommon trait of the highest and purest style of mind—embarrassed him so much that he knew not how to receive the polite attentions showered upon him; and while he was publicly condemned for his pride, he was secretly agonized by his self-depreciation. Dr. Bascom was an example of the same weakness, or virtue, as some would call it. To those who enjoyed his intimate acquaintance he revealed a nature full of generous frankness and cordiality. "To such," says one of his Southern brethren, "he was as simple as a child, open to suggestion and counsel, amiable and lovely as a friend."* "A warmer heart, and more noble feelings," says Bishop Andrew, "beat not in the bosom of mortal; there was a spring of kindest affection there which never ran dry."

He died at Louisville, Kentucky, surrounded by old and endeared friends, on the 8th of Sep-

* Dr. Wightman, Southern Christian Advocate.

tember, 1850. When asked if his spirit was sustained in the final conflict by the grace which he had preached to others, his reply was, "Yes, yes, yes!"

Notwithstanding any critical detractions from the popular estimate of his intellectual character, those who have heard him in his successful efforts will remember the occasion as a privilege, an exhibition of magnificent mind—magnificent, though, like the grandeur of the mountain, made up of broken outlines, rough cliffs, dark ravines below and sunlit effulgence above.

We pass to another name which has become a synonyme among us for almost every trait of mental symmetry and moral beauty—Wilbur Fisk. He also, like Cookman, came of a primitive Methodist stock, and a strong ingredient of New-England Puritanism did not mar the composition of his noble nature. He began his ministry in 1818, when about twenty-six years of age. His pastoral labors extended through eight years; the remainder of his life, including some fourteen years, was spent in literary institutions of the Church. He may be pronounced the founder of the educational provisions of New-England Methodism—provisions which we

believe are now more complete than in any other section of the Church, comprising a well-related series of one or more independent academies for each conference, and a university and theological school for them jointly. Dr. Fisk saw the absolute necessity of such institutions for Methodism, especially in the Eastern States, where the whole people were educated, and where education could not well be divested of sectarian influences, except in its most elementary forms. His successful plans have rescued the youth of the Church from the proselytism of other sects. They have already made a visible, an almost universal impression on the character of New-England Methodism, especially of its ministers, a very large proportion of whom have spent more or less time in preparatory studies in its seminaries.

Wilbur Fisk's person bespoke his character. It was of good size and remarkable for its symmetry. His features were beautifully harmonious, the contour strongly resembling the better Roman outline, though lacking its most peculiar distinction, the *nasus aquilinus*. His eye was nicely defined, and when excited beamed with a peculiarly benign and conciliatory expression. His complexion was bilious, and added to the

diseased indication of his somewhat attenuated features. His head was a model not of great but of well-proportioned development. It had the height of the Roman brow, though none of the breadth of the Greek. The two portraits of him which have been given to the public recall his appearance well enough to those who were familiar with it, but can hardly afford an accurate impression to such as never saw him. The first of them, presenting him in the primitive ministerial costume of the Church, (which he doffed, we believe, in later years,) has too much of the languor of disease: there is an aspect of debility, if not decay, about it, which did not belong to the original, notwithstanding his habitual ill-health. It is preferred, however, by many of his friends, to the second engraving —an English production, marked by ideal and somewhat pompous exaggerations, and not a little of that exquisite and unnatural nicety with which our English brethren are flattered in their published portraits. There is a bust of him extant; but it is not to be looked at by any who would not mar in their memories the beautiful and benign image of his earlier manhood by the disfigurations of disease and suffering. His voice was peculiarly flexible and sonorous:

a catarrhal disease affected it; but just enough, during most of his life, to give it a soft orotund, without a trace of the nasal tone, which is so common in the Eastern states. It rendered him a charming singer, and was an instrument of music to him in the pulpit. Without appearing to use it designedly for vocal effect, it was nevertheless an important means of impression to his sermons. Few men could indicate the moral emotions more effectually by mere tones. It was especially expressive in pathetic passages.

His pulpit manner was marked, in the introduction of the sermon, by dignity, but dignity without ceremony or pretension. As he advanced into the exposition and argument of his discourse, (and there were both in most of his sermons,) he became more emphatic, especially as brilliant though brief illustrations, ever and anon, gleamed upon his logic. By the time he had reached the peroration his utterance became rapid, his thoughts were incandescent, the music of his voice rung out in thrilling tones, and sometimes even quivered with trills of pathos. No imaginative excitement prevailed in the audience as under Maffitt's eloquence; no tumultuous wonder, as under Bas-

com's; none of Cookman's impetuous passion, or Olin's overwhelming power, but a subduing, almost tranquil spell, of genial feeling, expressed often by tears or half-suppressed ejaculations;—something of the kindly effect of Summerfield combined with a higher intellectual impression.

We cannot claim for Dr. Fisk genius, nor the very highest order of mind. Good vigor in all his faculties, and good balance of them all, were his chief intellectual characteristics. His literary acquisitions were not great. The American collegiate course in his day was stinted; after his graduation he was too busy to study much, and he was not a great reader. His resources were chiefly in himself—in his good sense, his quick sagacity, his generous sensibilities, and his healthy and fertile imagination. He possessed the latter power richly, though it never ran riot in his discourses. It was a powerful auxiliary to his logic—an exemplification of Dugald Stewart's remark on the intimate relation between the imagination and the reasoning faculty in a well-balanced mind. Its scintillations were the sparkles that flew about the anvil on which his logic plied its strokes.

His sermons, if examined in print, would pass for good, but "second-rate" productions; that is to say, they would rank below those of Chalmers, Channing, Robert Hall, or Olin; but if heard from his own lips in the pulpit, the hearer—even the educated and critical hearer—inspired with the preacher's manner and sensibility, would be disposed to assign them to the "first-rate" class. His style, not being formed from books, was the natural expression of his vigorous and nicely-balanced mind; it was therefore remarkable for its simplicity and terseness, its Saxon purity and energy. There cannot be found a meretricious sentence in all his published writings.

He was not a metaphysician nor a dialectician, and yet by natural disposition he was a polemic. This was a marked propensity of his mind; it was never abused into gladiatorship in the pulpit, but inclined him almost incessantly to theological discussion out of it. A jealous regard for the truth doubtless prompted this disposition; but we think it had a deeper foundation—that it was founded in his mental constitution. His polemical writings were not only in good temper, but examples of luminous and forcible argumentation. The sermon on

Calvinism may be referred to as a specimen. That discourse, with his sermon and lectures on Universalism, his essays on the New-Haven Divinity, his discourse on the Law and the Gospel, his tract in reply to Pierrepont on the Atonement, &c., would form a volume which the Church might recognize as no ignoble memorial of both his intellectual and moral character. His travels in Europe, though containing some examples of elaborate reflection and picturesque description, was not a volume of superior claims —it had too much of the ordinary guide-book character.

That very significant and convenient word, *tact*, expresses a quality which Wilbur Fisk possessed in a rare degree. He was uncommonly sagacious in perceiving, and prompt in seizing the practical advantages of his position, whatever it might be; hence his adroitness in controversy, the success of his platform addresses, his almost certain triumphs in conference debates, and the skill of his public practical schemes—excepting always those which were *financial*, in which respect, we think, he signally failed—a defect quite usual with men of genius, but not with men of his mental characteristics.

His moral character was perfect as that of any man whom it has been our happiness to know. His intimate friends will admit that there is hardly a possibility of speaking too favorably of him in this respect. After some years spent in personal relations with him, we are literally at a loss to mention one defect that marred the moral beauty of his nature. We are aware that this is saying very much; that it is saying what cannot be said of one man perhaps in a million, but we deliberately say it of this saintly man. Serene, cheerful, exempt from selfishness, pride, and vanity, tender yet manly in his sensibilities, confiding in his friendships, entertaining hopeful views of Divine Providence and the destiny of man, maintaining the purest and yet the most unelaborate piety—a piety that appeared to believe and enjoy and do all things good, and yet to "be careful for nothing"—he seemed to combine the distinctive charms that endear to us the beautiful characters of Fenelon and Channing, Edwards and Fletcher of Madeley. His humility was profound, and surrounded him with an aureole of moral loveliness. It was not a burden of penance under which the soul bowed with self-cherished agony; still less was it a "voluntary

humility"—an assumed, an affected self-abasement; but it seemed the spontaneous, kindly and tender demeanor of his soul: it mingled with the cheerful play of his features, and gave a sweet suavity to his very tones. It was his rare moral character, more than his intellectual eminence, that gave him such magic influence over other minds, and rendered him so successful in the government of literary institutions. All about him felt a sort of self-respect in respecting him; to offend him was a self-infliction which even the audacity of reckless youth could not brook.

Fisk lived for many years in the faith and exemplification of St. Paul's sublime doctrine of Christian perfection. He prized that great tenet as one of the most important distinctions of Christianity. His own experience respecting it was marked by impressive circumstances, and from the day that he practically adopted it till he triumphed over death, its impress was radiant on his daily life. With John Wesley he deemed this important truth—promulgated, in any very express form, almost solely by Methodism in these days—to be one of the most solemn responsibilities of his Church, the most potent element in the experimental divinity of

the Scriptures.* In his earlier religious history he had felt the influence of those temptations which have betrayed so many young men from our ministry into other communions, where better worldly auspices rather than better means of self-development or usefulness were to be found; but when he received the baptism of this great grace, his purified heart could not sufficiently utter its thankfulness that he had been providentially kept within the pale of a Church which clearly taught the preëminent doctrine. This alone was a denominational distinction sufficiently important and sublime to be set off against

* Isaac Taylor, in his late work on Methodism, repels this doctrine as refuted by every man's consciousness. Knox, in a letter to Bishop Webb, says, "Their view of Christian perfection is, in my mind, so essentially right and important, that it is on this account particularly I value them above other denomination of that sort. I am aware that ignorant individuals expose what is in itself true, by their unfounded pretensions and irrational descriptions; but with the sincerest disapproval of every such excess, I do esteem John Wesley's stand for holiness to be that which does immortal honor to his name. * * * In John Wesley's views of Christian perfection are combined, in substance, all the sublime morality of the Greek fathers, the spirituality of the mystics, and the divine philosophy of our favorite Platonists. Macarius, Fenelon, Lucas, and all of their respective classes, have been consulted and digested by him, and his ideas are essentially theirs.—*Thirty Years' Correspondence. Letter XIX.*

any drawback that Methodism might present. In a letter to a brother clergyman, he expressed, with overflowing feelings, his renewed love of the Church. "I thank God," he said, "that I ever saw this day. I love our Church better than ever. How glad am I that I never left it." There are two periods at which a Methodist assuredly feels no regret for his connection with the denomination—when he learns by experience what is the meaning of its instructions respecting Christian perfection, and when death dismisses him from its communion to the Church triumphant.

On the 22d of February, 1839, in the forty-eighth year of his age, Wilbur Fisk received that dismission. His chamber had been for days sanctified as it were by the glory of the Divine Presence, and his broken utterances were full of consolation, and triumph over death. "Glorious hope!" was the last and whispered expression of his religious feelings.

Stephen Olin stands forth with commanding prominence and an imperial mien among the princes of our Israel. He was a shining light, a full orb—if not the most notable, yet the most intrinsically great man, take him "all in all,"

that American Methodism has produced. So manifest and commanding were his traits, that this preëminence can be awarded him without the slightest invidiousness.

His character—moral, social and intellectual—was, throughout, of the noblest style. In the first respect he was preëminent for the two chief virtues of true religion—charity and humility. With thorough theological orthodoxy he combined a practical liberalism which we fear most orthodox polemics would pronounce dangerous. There was not an atom of bigotry in all the vast soul of this rare man. Meanwhile, it could be said of him as Rowland Hill said of Chalmers, "The most astonishing thing about him was his humility." He was the best example we have known of that childlike simplicity which Christ taught as essential to those who would enter the kingdom of heaven, and which Bacon declared to be equally necessary to "those who would enter the kingdom of knowledge." Like Fisk, he was a personal example of St. Paul's doctrine of "Christian perfection" as expounded by Wesley. Respecting the Methodistic hypothesis of that doctrine he at first entertained doubts; but as he advanced in life, and especially under the chastening influence of

affliction, it became developed in his own experience. "I sunk into it," he remarked to the writer, in substance. "My children, my wife, my health, my entire prospect on earth, all were gone —God only remained; I lost myself as it were in him, I was hid in him with Christ—and found, without any process of logic, but by an experimental demonstration, the 'perfect love that casteth out fear.'" He was never obtrusive in the avowal of this great truth, but ever ready to give, with all lowliness and meekness, a reason of the hope that was within him. The marvelous grace that imbued, and, we were about to say, glorified, his very greatness with unsurpassed humility, was owing, in a great measure, to his faith in this sublime idea of Christianity.

He had defects, unquestionably; but so far as they took a moral tendency, no effort of charity was requisite in order to attribute them to his continual physical infirmities. Some of our most interesting and precious personal recollections of him are connected with instances of such apparent defects. The virtues which accompanied them seemed rather to gain than lose by the contrast, as precious gems are beautified by their inferior settings.

His social character was beautiful. If he could not indulge the *persiflage*—the sheer inanities which inferior minds may deem the appropriate relaxation of social conversation—yet was he ever ready, for not merely the cheerful remark, but the exhilarating pleasantry: his familiar friends will never forget this charming trait. Nor were these buoyant intervals rare or brief. Frequently through a prolonged but always fitting conversation, would this play of sunshine illuminate his presence, and with it would intermix, congruously, often most felicitously, a radiant play of thought or a happy expression of Christian sensibility—never, however, the meaningless twaddle of weakness. A truer and more forbearing friend could not be found. His domestic affections were warm, and the circle of his family was a sanctuary full of hallowed sympathies and enjoyments.

It would require a more capable hand than ours to estimate his intellectual dimensions. His scholarship was, we think, more exact and thorough within his professional sphere, than varied or comprehensive beyond that limit. We speak of *scholarship* as distinguished from general information. At his graduation he was considered the "ripest scholar" who had been

examined in his college. He was conservative in his views of classical education, and very decidedly opposed to the "modernized" system of training attempted and abandoned at Harvard, and now experimenting at Brown University. A high and finished classical discipline was his ideal for the college over which he presided; and that institution has sent out, under his superintendence, as thorough students as have honored the education of the land.

While he was a genuine scholar within his appropriate sphere, he possessed also a large range of general intelligence, though, as we have said, without that devotion to any favorite department of extra-professional knowledge, which often relieves and adorns the professional life of studious men by becoming a healthful and liberalizing counterpart to their stated routines of thought. We are not aware that he was addicted to the national literature of any one modern people; to the speculative philosophies which, with so much fallacy, have also developed so much mental vigor and splendor in the continental intellect of Europe; or to any one department of the elegant literature of our own language. We know not that he had more than a casual acquaintance with these,

derived mostly from Reviews. With the current history of the world in politics, science, and especially religion, he had, however, more than the usual familiarity; a remarkable memory, tenacious of even statistics and names, doubtless gave him, in this respect, an advantage over most intellectual men.

The *original* powers of his mind were, however, his great distinction. And these, like his person, were all colossal—grasp, strength, with the dignity which usually attends it, a comprehensive faculty of generalization, which felt independent of details, but presented in overwhelming logic grand summaries of thought. This comprehensiveness, combined with energy of thought, was the chief mental characteristic of the man; under the inspiration of the pulpit it often and indeed usually became sublime—we were about to say godlike. We doubt whether any man of our generation has had more power in the pulpit than Stephen Olin; and this power was in spite of very marked oratorical defects. His manner was ungainly; his gestures quite against the elocutionary rules; his voice badly managed, and sometimes painful in its heaving utterances; but the elocutionist is not always the orator. While you saw that there was no

trickery of art about Dr. Olin, you felt that a mighty, a resistless mind was struggling with yours. You were overwhelmed—your reason with argument, your heart with emotion.

When he began his discourse, your attention was immediately arrested by the dignity and sterling sense of his remarks. You perceived at once that something well worth your most careful attention was coming. Paragraph after paragraph of massive thought was thrown off, each showing a gradually increasing glow of the sensibility as well as the mental force of the speaker. By the time he had fairly entered into the argument of the sermon, you were led captive by his power; but it would be difficult to say which most effectually subdued you—his mighty thoughts or his deep feeling. You seldom or never saw tears in his own eyes, but they flowed freely down the cheeks of his hearers. Ever and anon passages of overwhelming force were uttered, before which the whole assembly seemed to bow, not so much in admiration of the man, as in homage to the mighty truth. Such passages were usually not poetic, for he was remarkably chary of his imagery; but they were ponderous with thought—they were often stupendous conceptions, such as you

would imagine a sanhedrim of archangels might listen to, uncovered of their golden crowns.

At suitable periods of the sermon, which usually occupied from an hour and a half to two hours, he would pause briefly to relieve his voice and his feelings. The mental tension of his audience could be perceived, at such times, by the general relaxation of posture, and the simultaneous, heaving respiration; but as soon as, with a peculiar, measured dignity, he resumed the lofty theme, all eyes were again fixed, all minds again absorbed.

Effective as was his preaching usually, it was not always so. His ill-health sometimes spread a languor over his spirit which no resolution could throw off. We recall an instance, which affords to our clerical readers too good a lesson to be omitted here. We spent a Sunday evening with him after he had failed, as he thought, in a sermon during the day. He referred to it with much good nature, and remarked that his history as a preacher had taught him to expect the blessing of God on even such efforts. He proceeded to relate an instance which occurred during his ministry in South Carolina. He preached at a camp-meeting where a Presby-

terian clergyman, who was to address the next session of his synod in Charleston, heard him. The Presbyterian doctor repeated not only the text, but, substantially, the sermon before his clerical brethren, giving, however, full credit to its Methodist author. So remarkable a fact could not fail to excite great interest among the people of Charleston to hear the latter.

He at this time occupied the Methodist pulpit of that city, and the next Sunday evening his chapel was crowded with the elite of the community, including several clergymen. He preached long, and as he thought, loudly and confusedly: in fine, he felt, at the close of the discourse, confounded with mortification. He sank, after the benediction, into the pulpit, to conceal himself from view, till the assembly should be all gone. By-and-by he espied some eminent individuals apparently waiting in the aisle to salute him. His heart failed. Noticing a door adjacent to the pulpit he determined to escape by it. He knew not whither it led, but supposed it communicated with the next house, which had once been a parsonage, as he recollected having heard. He hastened to the door, got it open, and, stepping out, descended abruptly into a grave-yard, which extended be-

yond and behind the former parsonage. The night was very dark, and he stumbled about among the tombs for some time. He reached at last the wall which closed the cemetery in from the street, but found it insurmountable. Groping his way to the opposite side, he sought to reach a back street by penetrating through one of the gardens which belonged to a range of houses there. It was an awkward endeavor in the darkness, and among the graves; but at last he found a wicket-gate. He had no sooner passed through it than he was assailed by a house-dog. Having prevailed in this encounter, he pushed on and reached the street, with some very reasonable apprehensions that the neighborhood would be alarmed by his adventures. He now threaded his way through an indirect route to his lodgings, passed unceremoniously to his chamber, and shut himself up for the night, but slept little or none, reflecting with deep chagrin on the strange conclusion of the day. On the morrow he hardly dared to venture out; but while yet in his study Mr. ——, one of the first citizens in Charleston, and a leading officer in a sister denomination, called at the house; he was admitted to the preacher's study with reluctance; but what was the aston-

ishment of the latter to hear him say that the sermon of the preceding evening had enabled him to step into the kingdom of God, after many years of disconsolate endeavors, during which he had been a member of the Church. The same day a lady of influential family came to report the same good tidings. Other similar examples occurred that morning; and this failure was one of the most useful sermons of his ministry.

His style was somewhat diffuse and always elaborate,—too much so for elegance. Johnson used to insist that his own pompous Latinism was an effect of the magnitude of his thoughts; its fantastic collocation, even in the definitions of his dictionary, stand out, however, inexorably and grotesquely against the fond conceit; the critics pronounce his verbiage a result of his early study of Sir Thomas Browne. False, in part, as was the great author's apology, it was also, in part, true. He had a magnitude, and Roman-like sturdiness of thought, which demanded capacious expression, though the demand was exaggerated, and thus became a characteristic fault, as well as a characteristic excellence. Dr. Olin's style was affected by a similar cause, but not to such a faulty extent.

The defect was perceptible in his ordinary conversation, and quite so in his extemporaneous sermons. In some of his later writings, however, like Johnson in his Lives of the Poets, he seemed to escape the excesses while he retained the excellencies of his style.

Dr. Olin was gigantic in person. His chest would have befitted a Hercules; his head was one of those which suggest to us superhuman capacity, and by which the classic sculptors symbolized the majesty of their gods. Though of a very different craniological development, it could not have been less capacious than that of Daniel Webster; and, crowning a much more lofty frame, must have presented, with vigorous health, a more commanding indication. His gigantic structure was, however, during most of his life, smitten through and through with disease and enervation. The colossal head seemed too heavy to be supported, and appeared to labor to poise itself. The eye, somewhat sunken in its large socket, presented a languid expression, though relieved by a sort of religious benignity which often beamed with feeling.

This great man must be added to the long and melancholy catalogue of self-martyred students.

His infirmities commenced in his college life; they were exasperated by his labors as an instructor in a southern climate; and were the burden of his later years, almost to the exclusion of any continuous labors. During these years his usefulness was confined mostly to occasional discourses, some of which have been published; to the quiet but inestimable moral power which the mere official presence of such a man cannot fail to exert over any responsibility to which he is related; and last, but not least, to the ministration of example under circumstances of suffering and personal religious development.

He was frankly independent in his opinions, and not without what would be called strong prejudices—no uncommon accompaniment of powerful minds. He was decidedly conservative on most subjects, though early inclined to political liberalism. On the rife question of slavery he shared not the strong moral sentiment of the North, yet he lamented the institution as calamitous. The Fugitive Slave Law he deplored as a necessary evil, and was favorable to its enforcement. He inclined to stringent institutions of government in both Church and State, but at the same time deemed our own

Church polity susceptible of many liberal improvements, in order to adapt it to what he considered the demands of the times. He wished to see the period of our ministerial appointments prolonged. He was especially interested in the intellectual improvement of our ministry, and was one of the warmest friends of theological education among us; before a theological school was begun in the Church he wrote home from London, where he witnessed the experiment among the Wesleyans, a public letter, urging the subject upon the attention of the Church, and inclosing a considerable donation toward it. He believed this, indeed, to be the capital want of Methodism in our day, and never disguised the conviction amid any prejudice to the contrary. He entertained sublime views of our missionary resources, and longed and labored to see its energies amply brought out and applied to this great work, especially in the foreign field. The evangelization of the world he deemed an achievement quite practicable at this day to Protestant Christendom. Some of his discourses on the subject were signal efforts of intellect and eloquence.

On the night of the 15th of August, 1851, it was our mournful privilege to stand in a small

and silent circle by the death-bed of this good and great man. The herculean frame lay helpless and heaving in the last struggle. "I hope in Christ," (pointing with his finger upward;) "most certainly, in Christ alone. I believe I shall be saved, though as by fire," were among the last utterances of the dying sufferer. Early the next morning he was no more among men.

Five of the most notable men of our denominational pulpit have thus passed in review before us—two of foreign, three of native birth. Others might be selected from the dead, and there are, among the living, those who will take rank with such as we have recorded.

We have endeavored to render each sketch suggestive of its appropriate lessons, and need not prolong our article by very minute comparative remarks. Olin was unquestionably the greatest, but Fisk the most perfect man in the series. The former had both the largest and strongest intellectual grasp, the latter more versatility and practical skill. Olin had the highest, the philosophical genius; and if his health had allowed him a productive life, he would have taken rank where, by the title of his genius he really belonged—among the first men of his

day: Fisk had talent and tact rather than genius; he was the practical though not the technical logician in both speculation and in life. Olin had very little of the detail of practical logic, but in him the higher logic, the faculty of generalization, was predominant; it gave grandeur to his habitual conceptions, though it could not take those minute cognizances of events or truths which afforded Fisk an habitual mastery over any position in which he found himself placed, and gave more perfect proportions to the development of his character. Cookman had neither the philosophic comprehensiveness of the one nor the practical skill of the other, but more mental alertness and energy than either. Olin could have best planned the destinies of a state; Fisk could have planned best the movements of its army; Cookman could have best executed those movements. Cookman had much of Bascom's imagination. His nature was too hardy, too Saxon, to admit of any resemblance to Summerfield. His allegorical skill was all his own. Summerfield's position in the group hardly admits of comparison. He had none of Olin's intellectual breadth, little of Fisk's tactical skill, not much more of Cookman's energetic vivacity, or of Bascom's imagination. His dis-

tinction was almost entirely one of temperament, a temperament to which was subordinated, in the happiest manner possible, all his powers of intellect and of expression. His soul was not in his head, but in his heart, if we may so speak. Never was the power of a public speaker more pure, more anomalous. It was not the power of logic proceeding from the intellect, it was not poetic power proceeding from the imagination, nor did it flow from the passions; it was a moral magnetism, a gentle suasive effluence from the inmost life of the man. His biographer, though he claims for him justly a second-rate kind of "genius," declares the "predominating" qualities of his mind to have been "*good sense* and *good taste*." Undoubtedly this was the case; but these qualities do not solve the problem of his power. There are thousands of men who have "good sense and good taste," but who have no such power. It proceeded, we repeat, from the peculiar and sanctified temperament of the man, his "intense animal feeling," as Montgomery somewhat equivocally calls it, and his "good sense and good taste" were but its regulators.

Such are a few of the marked characters and superior intellects which have arisen within the pale of Methodism, and thus has its ministerial

system been found suited to the highest pulpit talent, and at the same time capable of rallying and directing the ruder energies of thousands of uncultivated laborers; making them by its peculiar discipline "workmen that need not to be ashamed," and covering the continent with the fruits and signs of their apostleship.

THE END.

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